The Mystery of Ashton Hall

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Benjamin Nitsua pseud.

Austin, Benjamin Nash

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PROLOGUE OF THE REPORTER.

In undertaking to give a plain and truthful account of the very startling and mysterious occurrences in our quiet little hamlet of W——e, N. Y., now known and talked about as the "Mark Ashton Mystery," I want it clearly understood that I am not obtruding my humble self among authors and writers of fiction.

Indeed, I am not the writer of the greater part of this strange history, but rather a compiler, or editor, if you will, of narratives furnished by the parties who were chief actors in the drama.

I have only undertaken the work of collecting and revising the various narratives after much solicitation on the part of public men, and after much careful self-examination of my motives and fitness for the task.

As to the accuracy of the reports of the investigations held before and after Mr. Ashton's death (?) and the accounts of those conferences among the police and detectives, where I served as official stenographer, I can testify to their absolute accuracy.

If any one questions my motives—and no doubt some will—I have the approval of my own conscience, the approbation of my wife and the endorsement of my pastor in the Chalmers Presbyterian Church, where I have been a member over thirty years. I always hold that if a man can feel his own conscience approves an enterprise, and if his wife and pastor endorse him, he is strong to face the world.

I take a humble pride in saying also that I have served for thirteen years as court stenographer and have never failed to give satisfaction.

Though not experienced in the making of books, I can truthfully claim some qualifications as a reporter, not only in giving the correct language used, but also in describing, as I have in this work, what occurs and is pertinent to the case, in the conduct and looks of the witnesses.

If I have gone beyond this and seemed in several instances to attempt to read the thoughts and motives of witnesses, and to explain in some cases the emotions that swept over them in peculiar circumstances—well, God forgive me if I have mis-judged any! I will only vouch that I have given a truthful account of how matters appeared to me, a totally disinterested spectator as far as one could be.

Doubtless some will not be able to believe this narrative—so true it is that truth is stranger than fiction. That a perfectly sane man and a man of brilliant parts and of high principles, as I maintain, like Mr. Ashton, should have marked out for himself the seemingly unnatural course he did—that he should have had the courage and heroism to pursue his plan relentlessly for nearly a score of years, with many unfortunate results at first, but with a noble success in the end—will seem to multitudes unbelievable.

And what shall we say of the cowardly crime and the events that followed thick and fast—events that seemed to us at the time too wonderful for fact, though we saw the evidences of their truth before our eyes. I shall blame no one for disbelieving this narrative—for I even doubted my own senses at this stage of affairs.

And then again many will question the truthfulness of Mr. Jaffery's psychic method of investigating crime and tracing criminals. Heaven knows there are mysteries here so deep and vast that I shudder at the thought of touching them in my narrative. "I make no pretense of explaining anything in this part of my story," I frequently said to my wife and to my minister. "I only attempt to give the result of Mr. Jaffery's work. No one shall budge me from this resolution. I shall never, never attempt to explain his work."

That 'the course of true love never runs smoothly' is an old adage, and the reader will find in this story proof both of the rule itself and of the exception that proves the truth of the rule.

I have had some help, I confess, in making the framework of the story out of my personal knowledge of the events, the newspaper reports, the diary of Mr. Molson, and the narratives kindly furnished by the various

writers. I sought the advice of a very practical publisher and he tells me the following is the best order in which to arrange the narratives (I shall follow his counsel):

1. Prologue by John Gibson Hume.
2. The Story of the Crime and its Investigation up to the Arrest of Mr. Molson. By John Gibson Hume.
3. Personal Diary of Herman Molson.
4. Sickness and Death of Mark Ashton.
5. Strange Happenings at Ashton Hall. By John Gibson Hume.
6. Miss Lucille's Narrative.
7. The Solving of the Mysteries.
8. The Story of the Midnight Ride. By John Eben Williams.
9. The Strange Disappearance of Herman Molson.
10. The Rose Arbor on Chestnut Island (Molson's Diary resumed).
11. Later Happenings at Ashton Hall.
12. The Day of Revelation.

This will be, then, the order of the story and I wish to say before closing this Prologue that all the narratives are given precisely as they were written with one exception. It is this: In Miss Lucille's Narrative she alludes to her father's "resurrection," and I could not, as a strictly orthodox man, allow that to pass. I changed it to "resuscitation," a word which will not excite controversy or arouse opposition. I am glad to say that my wife and my minister both approve the change, the minister most warmly, because he thought the term "resurrection" was a sacred and scriptural word, employed almost solely in connection with the Lord himself and his miracles, and the use of the term here would, in his opinion, be almost blasphemous.

I humbly submit my work to the reader who will judge how faithfully and impartially I have performed my task.

JOHN GIBSON HUME.

The Mystery of Ashton Hall

THE TRAGEDY AT ASHTON HALL.

JOHN GIBSON HUME.

I can scarcely state the case of the murder more succintly, or express more fully the popular impression of the time, or the particular impressions of those first upon the scene and first among the many investigators of the crime, than by transcribing, as I shall quite fully and freely, the reports of our city press concerning this shocking tragedy. Many circumstances lent importance to this cold-blooded assassination of our chief financial magnate in W——e. The peculiar character of the Banker, the fabulous fortune which he is said to have amassed, the entire absence of any apparent motive for the crime or of any clue to the murderer, the suddenness of the shock, coming like a "bolt out of the blue," together with the many wild conjectures that at once filled the air —all combined to wake up the brain and heart of W——e, as never before in my recollection. We copy—leaving out the sensational headlines—from the W——e *Clarion*:

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"One of the most shocking crimes, one of the direst tragedies that ever disgraced our fair land occurred in our hitherto peaceful city last evening between 8 and 10 o'clock in the private office of the Mark Ashton Banking Company, where the leading capitalist of our city met his death (it is scarcely possible he will survive the day) at the hands of a cowardly assassin. He was found by the caretaker of the bank sitting in his chair, his head having fallen over on his left

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"Citizens who knew Mark Ashton well and his interesting daughters (he has been a widower for seventeen years) and the clerks and attendants in the bank and home, seem positive that the work is that of some secret enemy seeking revenge. Yet it is not known that Mark Ashton had personal enemies. As the Banker has only resided here three years, and his former life is but little known, it is suggested by some that the crime may have its roots in the distant past. Others again are disposed to think that in some of his large and successful stock operations in New York City, carried on in some cases by himself, and more generally by Parish, his head clerk and confidential man, he may have excited the bitter enmity of some defeated opponent who sought in this way to revenge his financial defeats.

"The murder is the one absorbing topic of the city. In every store and shop, and every street corner and in every saloon, in every hotel and club,

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and in every home the one absorbing question on the lips of young and old, is, who shot Mark Ashton? and, with what motive was it done?

"Until every one in and about the house and bank has been thoroughly questioned and all the facts of this dreadful crime are laid bare, we shall not have the data for a correct judgment of the case and we must restrain our indignation and cultivate patience, knowing that 'justice, though lame of foot, will surely overtake the culprit.'

"At present while but little is known of the facts and circumstances bearing on the case, one inference seems warranted and that is, robbery had nothing to do with the murder. Not only was nothing stolen, but even the very thought of robbery seems an absurdity when the hour and circumstances of this deed of blood are taken into consideration.

"It seems impossible to build up a plausible theory of suspicion against anyone usually having access to the house or office. On the other hand, if the master of Ashton Hall was shot by a stranger, how did the murderer gain access to the hall adjoining the private office from which it seems evident the shot was fired?

"Again if the revolver used was that accustomed to lie in the drawer of Mark Ashton's library, how could a stranger gain access to this, even presuming he knew of its existence?

"The police have been very reticent but from the few words overheard by our reporter in their conversation one with another, from the expression of their faces and general demeanor, the impression, clear and distinct, has been gained that there are very peculiar elements connected with this crime, and that a most infamous deed of diabolic cunning has disgraced our fair community, which it will be ex-

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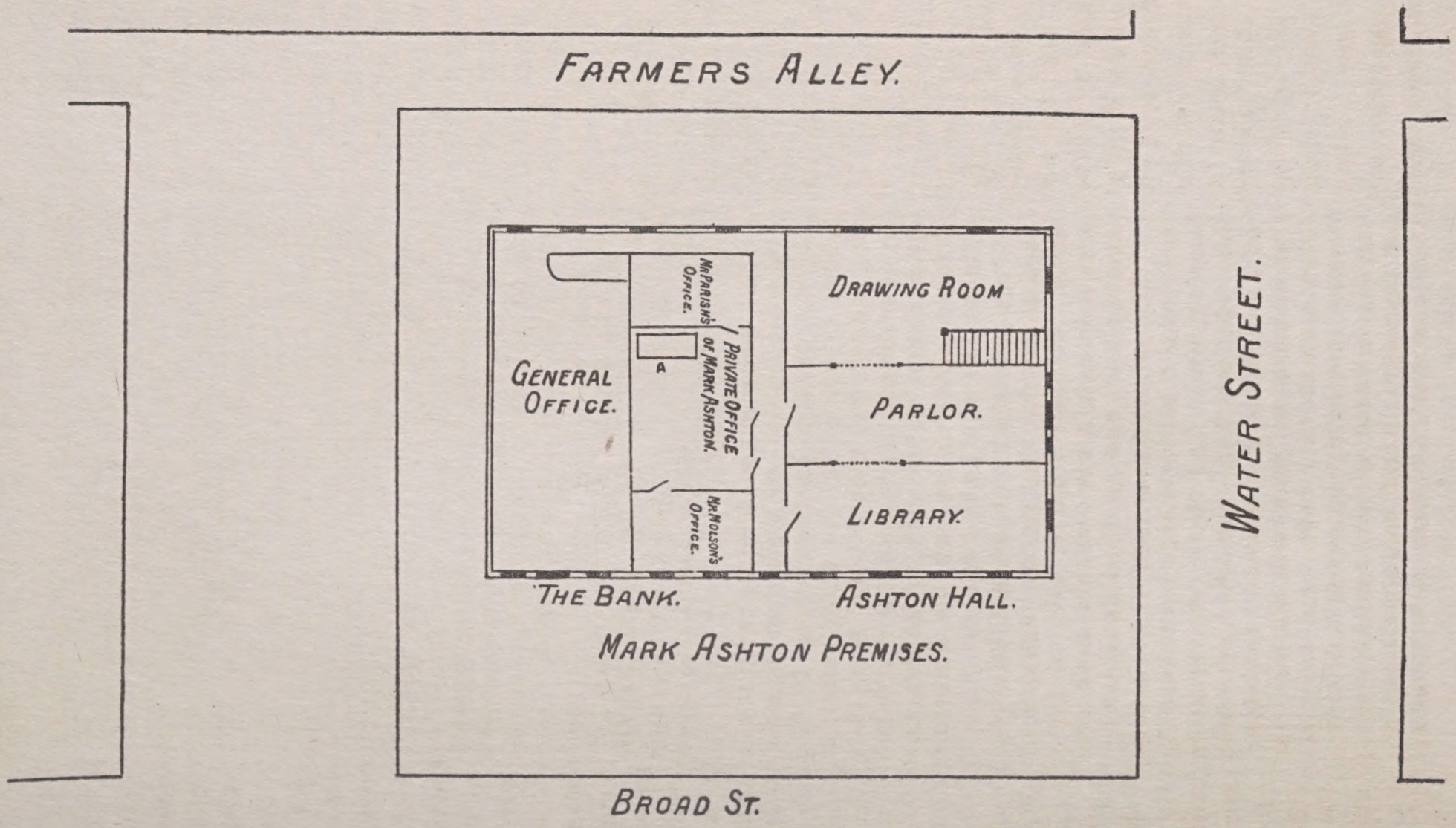

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tremely difficult to unravel and bring home to the transgressor.

"It seems exceedingly strange that no one, so far as report has reached us, seems to have heard a revolver fired. Tomorrow we shall give a plan of the rooms in the Ashton mansion and the offices adjoining—now in one building—from which our readers can more intelligently grasp the circumstances and conditions surrounding this appalling tragedy.

"As it seems evident there is but one place from which the assassin could have fired the fatal bullet which killed Mark Ashton, at the angle of incidence with which it actually reached his brain, and that is in the hall near the wicket window, a little to one side and above the level of Mr. Ashton's private office, and as this bullet was fired at an hour when no one in bank or office heard the report of its discharge, it seems to imply the full knowledge of one acquainted with house and office or the possession of super-human cunning, or both.

"The theory of suicide is, of course, utterly out of the question. But, inasmuch as multitudes of silly people will adopt theories without any facts to support them, it may be well to point out to the public the incontrovertible proofs of murder in this case. First, it would be utterly impossible for any man to hold a revolver and lodge a bullet in his own brain where Mark Ashton was shot without leaving on his hands or head, or both, marks of the explosion. Second, after shooting himself as Mark Ashton was shot (if that were possible) a man could not possibly secrete the revolver with which the shot was fired.

"Third, there was no one in W——e less likely to commit suicide than Mark Ashton. No one had more to enjoy in this life. All reports agree in stating that he was in unusually good spirits the last few days.

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"Fourth, the wicket window through which mail is passed in from the hallway, just beside the door, and which is protected on the inner side by a board slide cover, was found slightly opened. A bullet fired through this window would produce precisely such a wound as Mark Ashton received.

"The Banker still lives, but his death is expected any hour.

"Rumor declares that extraordinary efforts are being put forth by the police to ferret out the facts in the case and our readers may rest assured that no effort or sacrifice of money will be spared to discover the criminal and to bring him to justice."

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THE ASHTON TRAGEDY.

Particulars of the Crime—Facts About the Ashton Family.

"In addition to our full reports in earlier editions of this most deplorable tragedy—the most shocking crime in the history of our city—we now supply many details gathered by reporters and most interesting facts concerning this remarkable man and his lovely daughters, now prostrated with grief and horror.

"Mark Ashton came to W——e three years ago, reputed to be a man of immense fortune and purchased the old Hooker residence, now known as Ashton Hall, and an adjoining smaller building which he removed so as to unite them in one structure. The house underwent extensive repairs and alterations and the smaller building was fitted up as an office, the family residing, in the meantime, at the Ho-

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tel Traymore. After the changes had been effected, the house was furnished in such expensive and elegant style that our citizens were at once impressed with the fact that a man of taste and abundant means had come into our midst. At the housewarming reception the elite of W——e were invited and all that lavish expenditure, with art and music, kindness and courtesy, could do, was done to make the best families of our city feel thoroughly at home in Ashton Hall.

"Since then these palatial apartments have been a social center for our citizens and the beautiful and accomplished daughters, Helena and Lucile, of whom we shall have more to say presently, have won friends on every hand, while the Banker has mingled but little in society and has been much absorbed in his large financial interests here and in New York. Since opening his private banking establishment, known as the Mark Ashton Banking Company, he has done a very large business in notes, exchange and stocks, his principal dealings being on New York Stock Exchange where he was generally represented by his agent, Mr. Parish. He has also done a very large business in the farming community through local agents. He was also interested in real estate in our city and has made most fortunate ventures in the erection of several new blocks and apartment houses, so that rich as he was, when he came into our midst, it is popularly reported that his wealth has doubled within the last three years. Large as his fortune is known to be no one has ever been able to gain from him or from his clerk any direct hint as to the amount of his wealth, but a well informed business man of our city, who is likewise interested in the Stock

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Exchange of New York, has estimated Mark Ashton's profits in stocks during the past six months at over half a million.

"He was a remarkable man in many ways. Standing over six feet in height and of a commanding presence, with a most pleasing and striking physiognomy and an inherent dignity which suggested and compelled respect, he was no less distinguished by his keen and penetrating reason, wide general intelligence and command of excellent language and manner. He had the grace of movement that characterizes little children, the soft modulation of voice that belongs to a cultured woman, and the finished manners of a courtier.

"There were in him individual peculiarities that nearly every one noticed and wondered at—peculiarities that set everybody guessing as to their meaning and origin, and which nobody has yet explained. Two of these have been observed and much commented upon since Mr. Ashton came to W——e. The first is the manner of speech and action that impresses all who meet him socially with the thought that he has been an actor on the stage and possesses natural or acquired dramatic ability, or both, of a high order. This impression originated not from anything artificial or apparently studied in his words or conduct, but rather from the ease with which he expressed his ideas, not only by language but also by every look and pose of the body, and the fullness of that expression as evidenced by the depth of impression he produced by what he said. He could say a little thing so effectively, and had such a reserve power of expression, that in many minds the question arose: Where has this man learned his art of impressing people?

"Another characteristic of the Banker of Ashton Hall, perhaps we

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should rather say peculiarity, which many noted and no one understood, was in a sudden lighting up of his face when some wave of emotion—and he was a man of deepest feeling, as all agree—swept over him. On this point there was hopeless confusion of opinion among all our society critics, many of whom studied the Banker and discussed him, just as the students of Tolstoy and Ibsen discuss these great writers and devour every morsel of gossip about them and their works, although the Banker has never—so far as is known—been on the stage, or appeared in literary fields or attempted music or art. This, then, is the peculiar fact about him that though, so far as we know, Mr. Ashton has done nothing but acquire money, no one who has frequently met him would be at all surprised to learn he had composed a powerful drama, or won the plaudits of thousands by his impersonations on the stage, or triumphed in art or music, or been a powerful leader of men.

"This peculiar irradiation of face, a lighting up of the features so distinctly discernible that one could almost fancy seeing his face so illumined in a dark room, was not a frequent occurrence. It happened but seldom, but its effect on the beholder was not soon forgotten. All who witnessed it agreed that it was wrought by the play of deep emotions, but whether these were anger or sorrow or some uncommon feeling could not be determined.

"He was the soul of good humor and company, could tell and enjoy a good story, and seemed to enjoy society so thoroughly while in it, that his friends wondered why he should give his social nature so little play and allow business to so largely engross his life. He was a man of wide reading, of a philosophic turn of mind, a radical, it is said, in politics and a

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reformer in religion. He lived largely in a world of his own thought and feeling, despite his great enjoyment of social life and his great capacity for winning the admiration and love of his fellow men. Not much has been learned of his early history and antecedents, save that he is a native-born American, spent his youth in the West and South, but came here from Europe.

"The man who now lies dying at Ashton Hall was but little understood by the multitude—in fact, we may say generally misunderstood. Unfortunately the public knew him only as the Banker, close, methodical, exact and aggressive—and not at all as the man, genial, social and full of deep and abiding interest in the welfare of his fellows. If any of our readers assert that these apparently contradictory qualities could not co-exist in the same character, we venture to disagree with them. There are some who believe, and some who profess to know, that while posing before the world as a man of little sympathy with human suffering and uninterested in the moral concerns of men, he was yet a man of deepest human feelings and had the profoundest interest in all that concerns our common humanity. They even say that his private charities were large and constantly increasing. Possibly—who knows?—there was a secret in Mark Ashton's life, the discovery of which might explain many problems and enigmas in his character and conduct, aye, even the motive of the dire assassination itself, if we but knew it. Possibly, too, the secret may become known to us. And it is also possible it will go with him into the vast unknown and remain forever hid from human view.

"Our readers will expect some account of the family and the inmates

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of the home and will doubtless desire to learn something of the clerk and caretaker of the bank, as every morsel of information will be greedily devoured at the present time, not only by the general public, but especially by the many who are setting their ingenuity to work to discover, if possible, some plausible theory to explain the murder and find the criminal. We shall endeavor to satisfy this reasonable demand.

"The Ashton family at present consists of two daughters, Miss Helena, an adopted daughter of his cousin St. Clare, a young lady of very rare beauty and of still rarer accomplishments, who for some years enjoyed the best advantages New York and Paris select schools; and Miss Lucille, the Banker's own daughter. Miss Helena has brilliant conversational powers and her ability as a musician is very widely recognized. In society she is the acknowledged leader of a very exclusive set and is very popular, we are told, in some of the best circles of New York city, where she spends a part of every season. In addition to her own personal gifts and graces, Miss Helena is recognized as the heiress of the Banker. No secret has been made of this fact by the family and it has been, since their coming to the city, another circumstance among many that has excited more than ordinary interest on the part of the public and set the gossips to wondering why an adopted daughter should become 'the heiress' to the exclusion of the Banker's own child. There seems to be no doubt of the fact, however, whatever may be the motive, and the arrangement seems to meet the hearty approval of all the family, as between the young ladies themselves there has always existed the fondest and most devoted affection. And surely an arrangement that suits all

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the members of a family in a purely family matter should please the public at large.

"Miss Lucille, the Banker's own daughter, while of a more domestic type, is also a beautiful and interesting young woman, but, like her father, she cares little for gay society and prefers her book, her easel and her piano to the whirl and pleasure of fashionable life. She is a great admirer of her adopted sister and heartily supports her in her brilliant musical and social engagements. But it is as her father's companion and counsellor that Miss Lucille has best fulfilled her mission. Since the death of his wife in New York, when Miss Lucille was but a year old, the Banker has found his chief earthly solace in the love and devotion of this noble girl. Simple and unaffected in manner, affectionate in disposition, self-sacrificing by nature, she has found her chief happiness in entering into the plans and purposes of her father, and probably knows more of his motives and aims than all others. She invariably speaks of her father, it is said, with the deepest reverence and affection, and wonders that the people do not understand and appreciate him more. Of her mother little can be learned except that Mr. Ashton idolized her and cannot be induced, even at this late day, to speak of her, and has never shown the slightest disposition to attempt to fill her place. From Mr. Eben Williams, who resides at 'The Willows' and has for some years looked after the Banker's farms in this section, we learn that Mrs. Ashton was a woman of beauty and talent and that Miss Lucille closely resembles her in appearance and disposition.

"The domestics in the family are four in number: Mrs. Holland, the housekeeper; Mrs. Price, the cook;

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Mary and Lizzie Goodwin, sisters, the two maids. The housekeeper and the cook have been with the family nearly three years; the maids were engaged last May and came from Swain's Corners, sixteen miles east of this city. There has been no male servant residing with the family, the caretaker of the bank serving the household when required in that capacity.

"Of those in the Bank but two persons merit a mention. The first of these in order and position is Mr. Lewis Parish, who has been for over ten years in Mr. Ashton's service. He is a man of foreign birth, the first clerk and Banker's confidential man, and enjoys the reputation of being one of the most expert manipulators of stocks operating in New York City. He came to W——e with Mr. Ashton from Europe and enjoyed the unlimited confidence of the Banker, and may be considered almost a member of the firm rather than an employee. It seems that a very dear friend of Mr. Ashton's was applied to for information as to where the Banker could secure a man of undoubted probity, beyond the power of temptation, a man of energy and financial ability. Two months later Mr. Parish called upon the Banker with a letter of introduction from this friend containing most flattering testimonials. He was at once accepted and has been ever since in steady employment. He has managed many of the most important and delicate of Mr. Ashton's business negotiations and conducted most of the stock jobbing operations and with singular success and fidelity. Mr. Ashton has often been heard to speak of his rare ability and of the great confidence he reposed in Mr. Parish. He is known to have had a personal interest in many of the transactions he carried out altogether apart from his liberal

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salary. The Banker regarded him as a tower of strength in his business. Standing so near to the Banker as he did, it is no wonder Mr. Parish was overwhelmed by the tragedy and is scarcely able to leave his rooms.

"The next official, the second clerk, is a much younger man and has only been in the Banker's employment not quite five months. He is tall, well built, of prepossessing appearance, and, judging by his head and face, a man of artistic temperament, of refined taste more suited to the position of teacher, artist or clergyman than the sordid business of counting cash and computing interest. He has been assistant to Mr. Parish for the past five months and his services have been very satisfactory to both the head clerk and Mr. Ashton—so much so that earnest efforts have been put forth to induce him to enter upon banking as a profession, but, we understand, without success. Mr. Herman Molson, for that is the young man's name, is a very cultured and talented musician, having spent the last five years at Leipsic Conservatory and graduated there in violin studies and practice. He is very much devoted to his profession and has resisted most tempting offers from the Banker to abandon it. He is well and favorably known to the musical circles of our city and his public appearances invariably attract a large number of music lovers to his concerts and the musicales where he is accustomed to appear. For one so young, he is considered by musical critics a remarkable performer, reminding his auditors of the weird power of Remenyi and the captivating strains of Ole Bull. Mr. Molson, it has been quaintly said, plays perfectly on two instruments at the same time —his violin and the heart of his hearer. It seems generally granted

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by the musicians of our city that he possesses, in a peculiar degree, the power of reaching and stirring the emotional nature of his hearers. He has been much lionized in our best circles since coming here, but does not appear to be fond of society. Though as a performer he seems bold and undaunted, at all other times he appears rather ill at ease in the social cirle and so extremely diffident and sensitive that he usually seeks an excuse for early leave-taking. His greatest fault in the opinion of social leaders is this aversion to society and his apparent indifference to the fair sex.

"Michael Hallaran, the caretaker, is, as his name implies, an Irishman. He came to this country in the service of Lewis Parish and was engaged as caretaker at the opening of the Bank, in which position he has steadily remained, giving complete satisfaction to all. Mr. Hallaran attends to lighting, heating, and general oversight of the bank, and is more or less constant in attendance during business hours from 10 A. M. to 4 P. M. In the evenings and cold weather he usually visits the Bank about 7 o'clock to inspect the premises and see that the Banker's private office is comfortable for the evening. It was the Banker's custom to spend three or four evenings a week in his own private office from 8 to 9, or even as late as 10 o'clock. Mr. Hallaran also regularly visited the bank at 10 P. M. to again inspect the premises and see that lights were out and fires in good condition. As he lives in Seneca Flats, just opposite the bank, and can be summoned at all times by an electric bell, he may he said to be constantly in attendance. He is a devout Christian, very regular in attendance upon Father O'Mahoney's services and has never been accused

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of any dishonesty or crime. These are all the parties who would have access to the bank in the evening and most of these only from Ashton Hall, for, as many of our readers know, the two buildings are now united and it seems difficult, if not impossible, to harbor a thought of suspicion towards any one of this number.

"We have gone somewhat at length into a description—so far as the facts at hand permitted—of the various persons familiar to the premises that the full purport of the problem, Who murdered Mark Ashton? may be perceived by our readers. The chief difficulty seems to lie in the fact that none of the inmates of the bank or Hall could have committed the crime or can even be thrown under suspicion. Yet the equally apparent fact must be admitted that Mark Ashton's murderer knew the 'ins and outs' of the Bank and Hall and where to obtain the loaded revolver and the opportune moment in which to fire the bullet, when all parties were so disposed that no one even heard the report. Probably at no other hour during the year were the members of the family and household so scattered as at the fatal hour of the murder. This fact—unless one can imagine some vagabond highwayman stumbled upon the right hour, and the right way into the bank, and the right place to find the weapon—points to the presence in our midst of some *artist in crime*."

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From the W——e Daily *Courier* of January 2, 19—, we extract the following:

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"Contrary to the opinion of all the medical men, Mark Ashton still survives. There are no signs of returning consciousness. Dr. Agnew of the Howard Hospital and several local physicians have been in constant at-

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tendance upon him since the fatal night when he was discovered unconscious and fatally wounded in his office chair. Dr. Bronson, the celebrated specialist in wounds of the brain, has been summoned from New York. Occasionally Mr. Ashton appears to suffer and moans piteously, but the physicians assert he has no conscious suffering. For the most part he lies still and listless and appears to be gradually sinking. Miss Helena Ashton is, we learn, completely prostrated and threatened with brain fever. Miss Lucille, though she appears to have passed through a serious illness in the last few days, is in constant attendance upon her sister. She is by physician's orders practically excluded from the library, where her father is passing the few remaining hours of his life. Meantime no clew —not even the slightest—seems to have fallen into the hands of the police or the detectives. Suspicion points to no one, and if our detectives have formed the slightest opinion regarding the murderer, they are taking the greatest precautions to keep it from the public.

"Rumor has it that Mr. Molson, the junior clerk, is seriously ill with nervous prostration and is threatened with an attack of fever. He is at 'The Willows,' the residence of John Eben Williams, in whose family he was reared and where he has lived up to a few months ago when he came to W——e, save the last five years spent in Leipsic. The shock of this crime seems to have prostrated nearly every one connected with the Bank and family. Mr. Parish, we learn, is also much overcome, yet he met a few people today on urgent business. The bank, of course, is closed.

"The police are proceeding, we learn, on the theory that some man from a distance gained access to the

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Banker's residence on the day of the murder and committed the crime for revenge. Although Mr. Ashton is not known to have had any bitter enemies, it seems only reasonable to suppose that in his long and successful career in different lands, he may have encountered the enmity and hatred of some defeated competitor for the golden fruit he was ever plucking from the tree of opportunity. He may thus have fallen a victim to his own successes. A careful search of the city is being made and of all hotel arrivals for some time before and after the murder to discover some clew. This line of investigation may be worth consideration, but for ourselves we are satisfied—harsh as the judgment may seem under the circumstances—that some one well-acquainted with the house and bank either committed the crime or was a party thereto. We only hope that thorough investigation may prove us wrong in this respect."

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INCIDENTS OF THE NIGHT OF THE TRAGEDY.

John Gibson Hume.

I shall now give in order the incidents of the night of the assassination as I collected them on the spot or got them fresh from the lips of witnesses.

On New Year's eve, 18—, as Michael Hallaran, the caretaker, entered the building of the Mark Ashton Banking Co., a few minutes past ten o'clock, he was surprised to find that the Banker had not yet left his private office—he seldom remained 'till ten o'clock—and very rarely later than that hour. Of late he had been accustomed to leave at nine or half-past nine. He entered by the main door on Broad St. and proceeded at once in his inspection of the main office, noted that everything was in its place, and the door opening into the back hall securely locked. The door opening into Mark Ashton's private office he also found secure.

As he concluded some business of unusual importance was detaining the Banker, the main office being warm and comfortable, he stood leaning against the bank counter for some minutes, waiting each moment for the Banker's cheerful voice apprising him of his readiness to leave the office, when he heard a faint movement as of a chair or table, and then thought he heard a low moan. A moment later he was sure of it and called to Mr. Ashton, but got no reply.

The Banker's private office is the middle of three private rooms, separated from each other and from the main office by wooden partitions surmounted by wire guards. Over these high partitions the caretaker could see the light shining from the Banker's office and conversation was readily had between the different rooms even when the doors were locked and bolted.

Suspicious now that something had happened to the Banker, Mr. Hallaran seized his small lantern which he always carried, went out quickly and locking the front

door, and unlocking the door of Ashton Hall leading into the hallway separating the two buildings, he entered the hall, opened the door looking down into the Banker's office—there is a descent of three steps—and saw what horrified him, almost freezing the blood in his veins—Mark Ashton sitting in his chair, his head fallen over on his left arm, his coat and shirt front covered with blood, evidently in a dying condition, his face ghastly pale save where disfigured with blood, and a bullet wound in the right side of his head!

Mr. Hallaran had never witnessed such a sight before, and though of an unexcitable temper and generally a brave and self-possessed man, stood horror-stricken, his limbs trembling beneath him, till a second groan from the Banker's lips recalled him to duty. Then rushing out of the door, he called a policeman a few rods away, crying, "For God's sake, get a doctor quick—Mark Ashton is shot in his office and dying!" Then rushing up to his rooms he apprized his wife. Five minutes later there were twenty people in the hallway, but no one had entered the room but Dr. Galloway, who had been called in from his office in an adjoining block. Michael Hallaran soon entered with policemen Patrick Donovan and Stephen Conrad, who took charge of the people gathered in the hall. The District Attorney was notified and a messenger sent to summon the Chief of the Detective Department, Captain Slane. The Doctor asked if the family had been apprized of the murder and on learning that no one had notified them of the tragedy, asked Mr. Herbert Williams, a rising young barrister of the city, and a friend of the family, to see that the news was broken to them as gently as possible.

Accordingly summoning by bell the hall maid, Mr. Williams found on inquiry that Miss Ashton was in her room, Miss Lucille at an entertainment, and on learning there was no one present who could more fittingly broach the subject, he summoned courage to send the servant for Miss Ashton. The girl returned saying Miss Ashton was too ill to come down, being very much agitated and suffering from nervous headache.

"Tell her, I must see her. Mr. Ashton is seriously

hurt," said Mr. Williams. The servant, Mary Goodwin, impressed by the commotion in the hall and by Mr. Williams' pallid face and agitated manner, that something serious had happened, began to cry and wring her hands and went sobbing up to Miss Ashton's room.

A moment later, Miss Ashton, wearing a light kimono, her large eyes gleaming bright, her face pallid with fear, her jet black tresses unconfined, stole like a ghost down the stairs, seized Mr. Williams' arm and gasped out, "Papa Ashton hurt? When? How? For God's sake, speak to me!"

"Summon all your courage, Miss Ashton," said Mr. Williams. "Your father is severely hurt—we don't know—how."

She was standing in the hall near the staircase railing and swaying like a tree ready to fall. She seemed unable to frame another word, but looked at him with such a helpless, pitiful look that he felt he must go on. "He was shot in his office, but still lives."

"Shot!" she cried out, with a whole world of agony in that one word, "shot," and was sinking to the floor when he caught her and with the aid of the servant placed her on a settee. The girl was then dispatched for Mrs. Ashcroft and daughters, near neighbors. She came back announcing they would soon be over. Meantime Miss Ashton had recovered consciousness, but remained deeply agitated. She insisted on going at once to the office, but had to be forcibly restrained.

On the arrival of Mrs. Ashcroft and daughter, Mr. Williams started out to find Miss Lucille and on walking toward the Hall was fortunate enough to meet her and her friend, Miss Helen Gibson, chatting gaily as they walked briskly up the sidewalk. He bowed and said:

"I came to meet you. Your father——" and here his words seemed to leave him, but his agitated manner and faltering speech had already told her some great calamity had come into her life.

She stopped suddenly and turned towards him, her inquiring face asking, "Is my father ill?" and, seeing the deepening pallor on the young man's face, she asked, "Is he dead?"

"Thank God, no. But he is wounded—badly, I fear."

She gave a little cry of horror, and stood a moment, then would have started onward alone, but they restrained her on either side, and entered the front door directly to the Library rather than the hall door, the usual entrance.

Soon friends surrounded them and gave them what consolation they could, but restrained all their efforts to approach the suffering Banker.

Meantime Captain Sloane had arrived and after a few minutes inspection of the office and a few inquiries, marked the position of the Banker's chair upon the hardwood floor, and gave permission to the doctors to remove the Banker to the Library. He then securely locked the entrances after taking note of all who had entered the office since the murder, and putting the keys in his pocket summoned two policemen in attendance and soon had the hallway cleared and a few minutes later a policeman guarded each entrance to the house and bank. He then walked hastily away.

Half an hour later Captain Sloane returned and with him came Thomas Jaffery, who is not now a member of the regular force, but a man whose aid is much sought after in difficult and mysterious cases. He has been living in W——e for over a dozen years, but makes occasional visits to New York, Chicago and other cities, rumor says to give advice or assistance in the detection and conviction of noted criminals or in peculiarly complicated cases of crime. In all the time he has been living here he has never assisted the regular police or detectives of the city but once before. This was in the case of the murder of Bessie Gilman, the talented and beautiful daughter of Widow Gilman, who was found murdered in a little grove on the outskirts of the city. The police had worked upon the case incessantly for three months and every clue proved futile until one night Captain Sloane called upon Mr. Jaffery and begged him, in the interests of humanity, to come to his aid.

Mr. Jaffery, who is very sparing of his words, said, "I will sleep over it. Call at nine in the morning." The next day he began the case and one week later had a

young man, who had hitherto enjoyed a most excellent reputation, in custody, and extracted a confession from him.

This Thomas Jaffery is a most singular man, and has had a very wonderful career. An Englishman by birth, a school teacher for years, a clergyman by profession in the Methodist body for ten or twelve years, and latterly a detective on his own account, a man so well and widely known as to be sought after in many of the chief cities of the United States, as the solver of intricate criminal problems, and a special adviser to the profession generally. He is described as a man of wide reading, very eloquent as a speaker, but holding very strange views on many subjects and exceedingly peculiar also in much of his conduct.

Many surprising tales are told of him as teacher, clergyman, and later as detective and adviser of detectives, in the ferreting out of crime and criminals. Some of his most wonderful exploits took place, according to report, in Liverpool, England. He had, it is said, the gift of prophecy, but his special gift and crowning achievement was in his ability to "dream true," an ability he was able to utilize in criminal cases. There are almost enough veridical dreams attributed to him to fill a small volume. One of the best supported, because given the writer by a clergyman who knew him in England and who got the story from a police officer concerned in the case, relates how he was summoned to aid the police in Liverpool in finding a criminal whose whereabouts were most cleverly concealed. It is said that this occurred while he was in ministerial work. Mr. Jaffery refused his aid at first, but on becoming persuaded that the ends of justice would be defeated and the innocent might suffer, unless the criminal was brought to justice, and also being pledged a liberal compensation, agreed to render whatever assistance was in his power. He, after due preparations, went into a sleep that lasted nearly twenty hours and on resuming consciousness was able to give the city, street and number where the criminal lodged and where he was afterwards apprehended. He said that after studying the photograph of the criminal and deter-

mining to find him in his sleep, he passed into the trance condition and seemed to be in a large number of cities in succession, floating above the people in the street and in public assemblages, urged on and on by some irresistible impulse, or as following some invisible, intangible trail, until in a certain street of a certain town he beheld the man whose face was photographed upon his memory by the picture of the criminal, and following him home, he secured his street and number and remembered both when awakened.

Mr. Jaffery is a man about five feet ten inches in in height, not over the average weight, well built, with strong and sinewy muscles, an easy noiseless step and a mellifluous voice, with flowing, unaccented style of speech. He has dark hair, an expressive face, high forehead, is very full over the perceptive faculties, very wide over and between his temples, and has piercing dark eyes.

When Captain Sloane came back to the Banker's office accompanied by Thomas Jaffery, a look of pleasure and hope passed over the faces of Detectives Conrad and Philmore. Then the four of them passed quietly within the door, and, after a moment's consultation, went direct to the scene of the tragedy.

"Now tell me all," said Jaffery, and in detailed order Captain Sloane told the story as far as then known to the police—giving the statements of caretaker Hallaran, Patrick Donovan and Dr. Galloway, who were on hand before himself, occasionally appealing for information to his subordinates.

"Have you found the revolver?" asked Mr. Jaffery.

"No," said Captain Sloane, "unfortunately we have not."

"Any clues?" asked Mr. Jaffery.

"Yes and no," said Captain Sloane. "We have certain indications that may or may not develop into clues. Mark Ashton's left hand held at the time he was shot, a letter he had just written and half of it has been torn out of his grasp. Some one, the murderer or a confederate, wished to remove what might possibly be a clue to the detection of the crime. He probably found the hand closed so tightly as to be unable to get it without consider-

able effort, or possibly was frightened by some approaching footsteps, or may have thought the half which was torn away sufficient to destroy the sense of the letter, which was only partly completed.

"My own impression is this: Mark Ashton wrote a letter in part, got dissatisfied with it, or crumpled it in his hand preparatory to throwing it in the waste basket. Just then he heard a sound, the wicket door opened, and, as he looked up, the bullet struck his brain. In the fright occasioned by the sound, or shock of the discharge, his fingers convulsively closed on the letter (it required considerable force to extract the remnant from his grasp) and while he lost consciousness and the power to control his body, his unconscious mind, which operates in sleep and dreams and when consciousness has ceased and the power of movement is gone, retained the fixed suggestion given in that moment of shock or fright and refused to allow the muscles to relax and the fingers to give up the document.

"Mark Ashton did not wish every one to read that letter. But I am philosophizing, in place of answering questions.

"Then we have another, I don't know what weight to attach to it. The conclusion seems to have overturned the little clock upon the desk and it has stopped at 8:40 o'clock—probably the hour when the murder was committed. See—when I set it up it starts again and when I turn it over it stops. In some way the clock was overturned at 8:40. If not by the discharge, how was it done?"

Then in response to Mr. Jaffery's suggestion, he and the Captain went into the Library and obtained consent of the doctors to see the wound. After they had looked upon the dying Banker, Mr. Jaffery took the physicians aside and questioned them closely on the effect of bullet wounds upon the skull and brain,making minute enquiries as to how the edges of the wound would be effected by the character of the ball, the angle of incidence, the range from which the shot was fired, etc., and particularly upon the possibility of discovering by probing the direction of the bullet in the brain and how far this was a true indication of the point from which the bullet was fired.

Then they came back and secured a lamp and going to the door, from which, according to Captain Sloane, the shot had been fired, Mr. Jaffery opened it and listened attentively to discover whether or not it opened noiselessly. Stooping down he examined the hinges, but whether he found anything he expected to find, or was disappointed, one could not tell from his manner. He next proceeded to the wicket window and enquired if any one had inspected it as yet. It seemed not. He particularly wanted to know if it had been opened since the crime occurred. All present believed it had not. Then he examined the latch. It was not fully closed. But as he examined the hinges of this wicket window, I saw a sudden gleam of pleased surprise. It was swift and transient as a flash of lightning, but it showed me that Jaffery had found a clue. Then various other doors were examined in turn and the party returned to the Banker's office. Then Mr. Jaffery said to Captain Sloane: "You will, of course, make a thorough search of the papers, etc., in his desk, look up the part of the missing letter and the revolver, interrogate the party to whom the Banker was writing, go carefully into recent correspondence. All this is mere routine but very essential, for though the criminal can easily be found without these aids, we may need all possible help in bringing him to conviction.

"I wish to study what I have learned to-night free from any distraction and will not even see the torn letter till to-morrow. By that time I trust you will have the missing part and the revolver. Put your best men on the trail, men who can draw an inference and observe as well as see."

"Then you have learned something to-night, Mr. Jaffery?" said Captain Sloane. "Would you mind telling us what you have discovered?"

"The bullet was fired from the wicket window, not from the door," said Mr. Jaffery. "Preparations were made some time in advance. We have here a crime exceedingly difficult to unravel chiefly because the motives are undecipherable at the present time and the proofs of guilt will be hard to establish."

The detectives passed the greater part of the night in the bank and in Ashton Hall.

On parting from his comrades that night, Captain Sloane was asked by Detective Conrad if there was any question in his mind between murder and suicide.

"Murder, only murder and a most brutal and cowardly one," replied the Captain.

"Have you formed a suspicion of any one?" asked Conrad.

"It is too early for that," replied the Captain. "Outward circumstances point in a certain direction, but as many finer lines of indication point to a carefully prepared plot, it is possible we have an expert criminal to deal with and we must, therefore, avoid hasty conclusions from surface indications."

THE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE CRIME.

JOHN GIBSON HUME.

The investigation which Captain Sloane had announced to take place on January 1st did not come off till January 2nd at 10 A. M., as certain researches were still to be made, and as several of the parties to be questioned were too ill to attend. Mr. Ashton still survived, showing unwonted strength and endurance, with, however, an ever increasing tendency toward collapse, as indicated by his fluctuating and enfeebled pulse.

On the morning indicated it was decided also to change the place fixed upon for the meeting, as two of the principal witnesses, Miss Ashton and Mr. Herman Molson, showed in manner if not in speech a great nervous horror of meeting on the scene of the tragedy as at first suggested.

The investigation was accordingly held in the Drawing Room of Ashton Hall, the precaution being taken of admitting all who came from the outside by the side door, on the opposite side from the bank.

After a few apologetic words by District Attorney Cameron, Mr. Michael Hallaran, the caretaker of the bank, was called and told his story substantially as given in the papers.

When asked where he last saw Mr. Ashton prior to the murder he answered:

"About five o'clock that afternoon. He came through the hallway into the office and I met him as I was passing into the house with a note for Miss Lucille."

"Did he appear in his usual good health and spirits?" asked the Attorney.

"In his usual good health, sir, but not in his usual spirits. He seemed somewhat excited."

"In what way did this excitement show itself?" enquired Mr. Cameron.

"I noticed that his face seemed to have a kind of glow upon it—there was a light in his eye—and he stepped quicker and lighter than usual."

"Would you say that he was pleased or displeased?" asked the Attorney.

"Well, sir, I would say that he was highly pleased. Mr. Ashton's face always glowed when he was highly pleased about something."

Here Mr. Molson was seen to start as though an electric thrill had passed through his system. He turned pale, and every eye in the room was fixed upon him, so great was his agitation. Every face seemed to ask what hidden meaning there was in this fact for Mr. Molson.

"You say," continued Mr. Cameron, "that he came from his rooms into the hallway. Do you know with whom he had been conversing?"

"I do not, sir."

"Did he address you, or any one else in your hearing?"

"No, sir. But I heard him speak after he entered the office."

"To whom?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"To himself, I think, sir, as he must have been alone at the time. He walked up and down his office several times and I heard him say, 'I'll make the change now, the New Year shall see it, there's been suffering enough.' "

"Was that all?"

"That was all I heard, sir."

"Where were you, Mr. Hallaran, from six o'clock that evening till the hour when you found Mark Ashton shot? Give a connected account of how you spent your time that evening up to the murder," said the Attorney.

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Hallaran, "my wife, Mary Ann, was a little late for supper. She had biscuits for tea and that delayed her, and it was nigh on seven o'clock when I got through my meal. I sat smoking for a little time and did not notice it was past seven, till Mary 'Ann reminded me of the hour. So I was about five minutes late in going over to the bank to see that Mr. 'Ashton's office was warm and comfortable and every-

thing was right about the premises. I got back at half past seven and sat reading my book, sir, 'A Strange Story,' by Lytton, till ten."

"Did you go out during the evening?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"I went out for about ten minutes, sir."

"Where did you go? At what hour?" asked the Attorney.

"I went into Taylor's tobacco store just on the corner two blocks away and bought some tobacco, and into Smith's newstand and bought two New York newspapers and came in again."

"At what hour?"

"It was just twenty-two minutes past eight as I came in, for Mary Ann asked me the time as I came up the stairs and I looked at the hall clock and told her."

"You assert positively you were not out of your room after twenty-two minutes past eight till you went to the bank at ten?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"I do, sir," replied Mr. Hallaran.

"Then it could not be correct that you were seen entering Mr. Donovan's saloon shortly after nine o'clock? I shall be able to prove that you were on the corner of Broad and Chestnut Streets after nine o'clock and were seen entering that saloon."

Mr. Hallaran seemed much crestfallen and after a moment's agitation confessed his mis-statement. He had gone out and taken a couple of drinks with friends in the saloon mentioned. He was cautioned to speak the whole truth hereafter, and dismissed for the present.

Mrs. Hallaran on being called, corroborated all Mr. Hallaran's statements, as to the late supper, as to his reading the book, as to his coming in and giving her the time as 8:22 o'clock. In reply to a question she admitted Mr. Hallaran might have gone out and returned without her hearing from the kitchen where she was at work. She was positive he was only out a few minutes and returned at the time specified and that he was in his room reading between 9:30 and 10 o'clock.

Lewis Parish, Mr. Ashton's confidential clerk and trusted agent, was next called. We summarize all his

statements referring to events up to and on the night of the murder.

Had known Mr. Ashton for ten years and been, more or less, constantly associated with him as his confidential agent. First met Mr. Ashton in Glasgow, Scotland, where he went on a letter of introduction and commendation from the Rev. Roscoe Phillips, rector of a leading Episcopal Church in Dublin. This Reverend gentleman had met Mr. Ashton during a tour in Switzerland and they had spent several delightful weeks together, a warm friendship springing up between them which resulted in a correspondence after they had separated. Mr. Ashton, it seemed, had asked the rector if he knew ot any good business man, capable of handling stocks, organizing stock companies, and an expert business agent generally, a man with some knowledge of banking and a man of sterling, trustworthy character. The rector had been kind enough to mention Mr. Parish's name to Mr. Ashton and to give him a letter of strong commendation, which resulted shortly in his engagement by Mr. Ashton. He was at first secretary, afterwards served as agent, and had received and carried out many important commissions, had crossed the Atlantic several times to New York on Mr. Ashton's business, while Mr. Ashton was in Scotland.

(Here there was another sudden movement on the part of Mr. Molson whose nervousness excited general comment, and, on the part of many, pity).

Parish came to W——e with Mr. Ashton three years ago and had been steadily engaged with him since in the bank or in the New York Agency.

"Where were you the evening of the murder?" asked the Attorney.

"I went to F—r—e at six o'clock and returned a little past eleven." (The town of F—r—e is seven miles from W——e.)

"Did you go on business?"

"I did, sir," replied Mr. Parish. "I went to meet the agent of the Hartford Fire Insurance Co. We had received a renewal receipt for insurance and payment was then due, and I had agreed to meet the agent at the

Criterion and take supper with him. We had supper about seven o'clock and went to his room and smoked a few cigars. I got a shade lower rate on some insurance I took out with him on Mr. Ashton's new building on Pearl Street. I had intended returning about eight o'clock or nine at the latest, but I noticed a play was on the boards that night at the Smith Opera House and although it was more for children than men, I concluded to go. I was always fond of the story of Uncle Tom's Cabin when a boy and I said to myself, I will be a boy again for once and so I went. The play was over a little after ten, and I went back to my hotel, had a glass of beer with Mr. Snelgrove, the agent, got my rig and drove home. I reached the livery stable a little after eleven o'clock and on passing to my rooms over the bank, noticed the light in Mr. Ashton's office and a crowd about the hall door and on coming up, Detective Conrad told me of the murder."

"You will have no difficulty, Mr. Parish, I presume, in proving your presence in F—r—e on that evening and accounting for your time fuly between 8 and 11 o'clock?"

"None, whatever, sir," replied Mr. Parish with calm dignity and then went on to say, "the livery man from whom I hired the rig will testify—if need be—when I got it and when I returned it. My name is not on the books of the Criterion Hotel but the manager knows me well and will remember my visit, I am sure. The agent Mr. Snelgrove, will certify to my presence with him till 8 o'clock or after. I remember meeting Mr. Simon Barnes at the door of the Opera House and chatted with him for a few minutes. Mr. Barnes holds considerable stock with us in several of our companies.

"I presume he will recall that fact—and then—I may have—yes, I have the stub of the ticket in my vest pocket. Here it is: 'Uncle Tom's Cabin Co., F—r—e, December 31st, 18—. Yes, sir. I can account for all my time if you think it necessary for me to do so."

"Quite satisfactory, Mr. Parish, very satisfactory," said Mr. Cameron, and a semblance of a smile spread over his features.

There was a new look, however, on Mr. Jaffery's face, disguise or hide it as he doubtless endeavored to do, the

look of a man who has heard something that interests him.

After a moment's pause the Attorney proceeded with his questions.

"Do you know, Mr. Parish, if Mr. Ashton had any enemies?"

Mr. Parish paused for nearly half a minute before replying.

"I once knew a man in Scotland," said he, "who blamed Mr. Ashton severely for his financial ruin. It was some years ago. I did not think Mr. Ashton at all to blame in the matter. It was a question of one or the other of them losing and Mr. Ashton did what every business man would do, looked out for number one. I don't think I would call him Mr. Ashton's enemy since I never heard of him attempting or threatening to attempt any injury in reprisal. Aside from this one case I should say, No. Mr. Ashton has hosts and hosts of friends but I never knew a man I could clearly call his enemy."

"Had you observed any change in Mr. Ashton's conduct of late?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Parish with considerable emphasis. "Mr. Ashton seemed of late to be absorbed in thought. I should say his domestic affairs were engaging more and more of his attention——"

Here the interruption came not from Mr. Molson but from the heiress, Miss Ashton, who visibly shuddered and looked up at Mr. Parish with a look in which was mingled surprise and vexation and something closely akin to hate.

Several noticed it, particularly the detectives and Mr. Molson, but each face wore a different expression as though each had read his own meaning into that look.

"It is true," Mr. Parish proceeded, "that Mr. Ashton seemed much interested of late in some collections but even this seemed to have relation to the house rather than the bank. He spent less time of late in the bank and more in his home."

"Did he seem contented and happy?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"Never more so—never so much so,'" said Mr. Parish.

"You say Mr. Ashton was happier of late than usual. Was he not ordinarily a happy man?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Parish, "he was a man in good spirits as a rule, though I have seen him at times very much depressed. His face was a book you could easily read in his ordinary moods, but when he chose he could repress or restrain his feelings to perfection and could act any part his strong will suggested, and act it thoroughly too. He was a born actor, sir. He had what I should call a speaking countenance, generally. But when he chose he could make his face and manner and voice express perfectly whatever he liked to express. Ordinarily his face was the index of his feelings and his thoughts and I know of late he was a very happy man."

"What particular indications could you give to another person, Mr. Parish, by which he might know when Mr. Ashton was in his happiest mood?" asked Mr. Jaffery, who then turned and watched eagerly Mr. Molson's face.

"Well!" replied Mr. Parish, "I have seem him a few times when his face was transfigured—a special light spread over it such as I have never seen on another human face."

"What class of events, Mr. Parish?" continued Mr. Jaffery, keeping his eagle gaze all the time on Mr. Molson's face, "what class of events most pleased Mr. Ashton? Was it some successful business transaction, the overthrow of some rival, a large profit, or was it something relating to human character and conduct?"

"Always the latter" said Mr. Parish. "I never knew him to be exceedingly joyful over business gains. It was when he heard of, or read, or witnessed something noble in human conduct, something sublime as he called it in human action that his soul seemed on fire and to shine out of his face——"

Mr. Molson sprang from his seat, pale as a spectre, stood trembling for a moment, and fell into the outstretched arms of Mr. Williams in a faint. He was carried out and soon restored and soon came back, apolo-

gizing to the Attorney for the interruption. The incident caused a great sensation.

Mr. Jaffery, however, had not done. He had Mr. Parish specify certain incidents in which he had witnessed the glow on Mark Ashton's face, one when he learned that Miss Helena had stopped Dr. Galloway's horse which was running away down the street and thus rescued the helpless child in the rig from destruction, another after a conference in the office participated in by Mr. Molson and himself with the Banker on the subject of loaning money to the farmers, and still another instance, the very day of the murder he had seen the glow on Mark Ashton's face between five and six o'clock, as he sat in his office.

This confirmed Mr. Hallaran's statement as to the Banker's appearances about the same hour.

It was evident to many of those present that this questioning of Mr. Jaffery and the facts brought out had no direct bearing on the investigation and were looked upon as a waste of time. For myself, knowing Mr. Jaffery's ability, I did not doubt he had some good purpose in view—if only the instruction of some of the parties present—that prompted him to dwell on this particular peculiarity of Mr. Ashton.

The next witness called was the Banker's daughter, Miss Lucille.

She was pale and had a most frightened, even despairing look upon her face, as though plunged from the sunlight of joy and happiness of the preceding glad days into the realm of gloom and overshadowing mystery. At first she hardly seemed to notice the Attorney and his associates, so absorbed was she in tearless and unutterable woe. Only when she was addressed did she seem to wake from the stupor of grief and then it was with a start and a look of fright.

"When did you see your father last before the tragedy?" asked the Attorney.

"About five o'clock on that fatal day," in a voice a little above a whisper.

"Where was he then?"

"Going into his office, sir, from the drawing room."

"Did he appear well and happy?"

"I never saw him happier or in better health," she answered.

"You would say then he had no anticipation of any calamity, no fears or forebodings of evil?"

"On the contrary I know that he was especially full of hope and even of joy."

"Be kind enough to state to us some of your reasons for believing Mr. Ashton was looking forward with hope to the future and had no known cause to fear any calamity!"

"I will state some reasons which led me to believe he had no anticipations of evil near at hand," she answered. "He was in good health. His business was unusually prosperous. Some of his secret plans and purposes in life were about to be fulfilled and his dearest wishes gratified. I am not at liberty to explain—fully—what they were. They were plans cherished for many years and their fruition he thought was nigh at hand. . . . My father was one of the best men that ever lived"—her voice quivered with emotion and there were little sobs in her utterance but she went bravely on. "He was one of the least understood of men, a man of deepest sympathy, and divine charity for all, he delighted in secret good, despised the world's opinion, had many friends—and if every men knew him as I did, every man would have been his friend. He had not a single enemy that I knew or ever heard of. Nothing in his late experiences could cause foreboding. They were all so bright and cheering and joyful. I know many causes for his unusual good spirits of late and especially for his happiness on the day when he was shot."

"Did you have any conversation with him that afternoon?" asked Mr. Cameron.

Here Miss Lucille turned her head toward the wall, stood in agitation for a moment, then burst into a fit of such passionate weeping that every one present felt the agitation and the storm of sorrow that swept over her. For some minutes we all waited for the tempest to pass which shook and bent her as the storm shakes and bends the willows. Then calming herself by a noble effort, she

went on: "Yes, I had a conversation with him that afternoon, for as he was passing from the drawing room through the hall to his office, with his face illumined, he caught me up in his arms and said, 'Lucille, my darling, the hour for which I have watched and waited and prayed so many, many years is near at hand. The testing has been made and the result is pure gold, pure gold —pure gold. Oh, how happy we shall be when all is revealed!" and he kissed me twice and I was so happy that I could not speak."

Miss Lucille was asked what test Mark Ashton referred to but she remained silent.

She was not asked many questions, her evident grief and suffering and the utter absence of the faintest suspicion that she could be possessed of any facts bearing on the crime, tended to incline Mr. Cameron to mercy and her examination was, therefore, largely a formality.

One little circumstance, however, occurred as she was dismissed by the Attorney which evidently excited Mr. Jaffery's attention and led to her subsequent recall. It was this: There was an evident feeling of relief, even of gladness came over her face as she was given permission to take her seat. More, there was the removal from her face of that look of dread and apprehension that had rested on her countenance throughout her examination, especially as she glanced towards Miss Ashton with a quick, sharp look of gratification.

The latter did not seem to understand her but wore a puzzled expression on her pale face. It was evident to a close observer:

1. That Miss Lucille had escaped some question she feared.

2. That in some way she expected Helena to be as glad as herself over the escape.

3. That Jaffery, possibly others also, saw the necessity of finding out more fully the extent of Miss Lucille's knowledge, not of the crime itself, but at least of some facts that might direct suspicion upon others or have a bearing upon the detection of the criminal. That Miss Lucille for a moment entertained suspicion of her adopted sister at this time, Mr. Jaffery did not for a

moment think—as I learned after from Jaffery's own statement—but that she knew some fact which on the face of it pointed suspicion towards some person, probably the heiress, seemed as certain to Jaffery as that two and two make four. In short, Mr. Jaffery had such knowledge of the depths and shallows of human nature, of the springs and currents of human conduct, and possessed such ability to read the signals of these mental and emotional states, that the faintest modulation of the voice, the slightest shadow of a frown, the mere scintillation of a smile or the quivering of an eyelid, did not escape his notice and his careful analysis.

After luncheon the investigation was continued at 2 P. M.

Miss Helena was then called upon and gave her testimony.

All traces of color had faded from the face of the lovely heiress of Ashton Hall, as she stood before the Attorney and his fellow investigators. Her forehead and face were as impassive and dead as though cut from marble, all save her lustrous eyes which now had about them a look of pathetic hopelessness. She answered calmly enough, however, most of the questions and showed little signs of feeling save in the trembling of her hands.

After some insignificant questions as to how long she had been a member of Mark Ashton's family and where she received her education and how long since her return from college, the Attorney asked:

"When did you last see Mr. Ashton, before the attempted murder?"

"About five o'clock that afternoon."

"Where was he?"

"In the drawing room."

"Did you have any conversation with him?"

"I did."

"Will you tell us if, in your opinion, Mr. Ashton was in his usual good health and if he appeared to be hopeful and cheerful?"

"Mr. Ashton seemed in good health of late and in a very cheerful state of mind."

"Did you observe any undue excitement in his conversation or manner?"

Miss Ashton hesitated. Her hands were trembling and her eyelids dropped.

"Perhaps," continued the Attorney, "I can reach the information in a better way. Will you please tell us if any other person was present during your last conversation with Mr. Ashton?"

"Yes, Mr. Herbert Molson was in the drawing room at the time."

"Miss Ashton," continued the Attorney, "without wishing to unduly intrude into personal or family concerns, will you give us the nature and subject of your conversation that afternoon."

"I must refuse to repeat that conversation," said Miss Helena firmly.

"Will you tell us, then, if there was anything in that conversation to excite Mr. Ashton, say to please or displease him?"

"Mr. Ashton was neither more nor less excited than I have seen him on other occasions. There was nothing in the conversation that could have a bearing on the crime committed."

"Are you stating an opinion?" asked the Attorney, "or are you speaking from positive knowledge when you make that statement?"

"I am stating my opinion, of course," she replied.

"Will you state, Miss Ashton, that if that conversation were fully reported before these officers of the law that it might not disclose a possible motive for the crime committed?"

She threw up her hands in nervous horror, there came over her face a look of unspeakable anguish as she shuddered out her answer. "Never, sir, never!"

"You refuse, then, to reveal the nature of that conversation—but you will tell us if all three of you took part in it?"

"We did, sir."

"And how long did the conversation last?"

"About an hour or more."

"Was Mr. Ashton present during the entire conversation?"

"He was not."

"About how long would you say was Mr. Ashton in the drawing room?"

"Perhaps, ten minutes.'

"Then you were not expecting him?"

"I refuse to answer another question about that conversation," she replied hotly, her face flushed with color, her dark eyes gleaming with anger. She looked like Juno aroused.

"Very well, then," said the imperturbable Attorney, "we will not ask you about that conversation. We will ask about other matters. Dou you know, if at the time of this distardly crime, Mr. Ashton had any serious disagreement with any one?"

"He had not, so far as my knowledge extends."

"Was he personally on good terms with Mr. Molson at that time?"

There was no answer for a considerable time. Then a look of determination came over her face and she replied, "I have frequently heard Mr. Ashton speak in the highest terms of Mr. Molson. I know he greatly admired him in many respects."

"Was there not, Miss Ashton, to your certain knowledge some serious disagreement between Mr. Ashton and Mr. Herbert Molson?"

"There was," came from the white lips of the heiress.

"Do you not know that as a matter of fact passionate words and utterances were used on each side?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Following such passionate utterances, then, on the part of Mr. Ashton, would it not be most natural that Mr. Molson should cherish a feeling of resentment? Have you not reason for thinking Mr. Molson cherished such a feeling of resentment?"

She paused a moment, glanced boldly toward the pale face of Mr. Molson, and while a flame of crimson shot for an instant over her pallid face, she lifted up her head

with pride and said, "He is too noble in purpose and character to cherish such a feeling."

A thrill of admiration passed over her auditors, even the Attorney seemed silenced for a moment by the boldness of her words.

Detective Conrad than interposed a few questions.

"Will Miss Ashton be kind enough to tell us if she recognizes this revolver found on the day after the crime was committed?"

"I do. It is, I believe, one that used to lie in the drawer of the library case and belonged to Mr. Ashton."

"When did you see it last?"

"Some weeks ago when I was looking for a small manual on music when I had to search through several drawers to find it."

As she uttered the words, "some weeks ago," Miss Lucille turned an enquiring glance upon her sister's face, scrutinizing it carefully, and dropped her eyes. The statement it would seem was unexpected or, at least the calmness and sincerity of tone with which it was uttered must have surprised Miss Lucille. The puzzled expression was still discernible on her face some time after Miss Ashton had spoken the words.

All this was clear enough to the reporter but how much more Mr. Jaffery read in the action of Miss Lucille, it would be difficult to say.

"You are positive," continued the Attorney, "this is the last time you saw it till this moment?"

"I am positive," she said in a deep ringing tone with a shade of indignation in it.

Miss Lucille again glanced at her sister and cast her eyes upon the floor.

Out of all that gathering of police and detectives and officers of the state and witnesses, probably Mr. Jaffery alone read with proximate accuracy the language of the changing expressions of the face, the movements of the body, the modulations of the voice, the meaning of the change in that wonderful organ, the eye, and was able to draw logical conclusions alike from what was expressed and what the witnesses sought to hide, from voice and look and manner as well as from words, yet it was

extremely rare that his discoveries ever flashed their signals over his own impassive face.

"Miss Ashton, when Mr. Molson left you that particular afternoon he passed through the hall generally used, the one communicating with the bank?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would it be possible for one having the entry of Ashton Hall, say, anyone like Mr. Parish or Mr. Molson in passing unattended to the outer door, to step into the Library unobserved and appropriate the revolver?"

"I presume so," she answered.

"As a matter of fact do you know if any one besides the members of your family, if Mr. Parish or Mr. Molson, knew that such a revolver was kept in the library and where it was kept?"

"Yes, sir. I heard Mr. Ashton a few months ago mentioning the revolver and where it was kept. Mr. Parish also knew of its being kept there for he mentioned it to me the day of the robbery in F—r—e."

Mr. Jaffery here suggested that the Attorney should recall Miss Lucille as he had a question or two to ask her. She arose with a look of dismay upon her countenance.

"I have merely a couple of points upon which I want your assistance, Miss Lucille, if you will pardon my inflicting this double task upon you."

Miss Lucille came forward but her steps were uneven and faltering.

"It would seem that neither Miss Ashton or yourself saw your father after about five o'clock till the crime was committed," said Mr. Jaffery. "Was he not at dinner with you at your usual hour at six o'clock?"

"No, sir, he was not."

"Do you know why?"

"He sent us word he would not be down to dinner; he had some pressing work on hand and went to his own room."

"Had he occasionally missed his meals like this before?"

"Yes sir, occasionally he would miss one or even two meals in succession."

"Can you assign any cause for his conduct in this respect?"

"I have no certain explanation to give, only that when he got very much engaged in any work which interested him, he preferred his work to his meal. Sometimes I knew he dreaded losing what he called his inspiration by the interruption of ideas through the meal hour, and, I know he thought it an advantage to health occasionally to omit a meal or two. Often, too, when joyful or very sad, he did not wish to eat but wished to be alone."

"Do you happen to know anything of the nature of the conversation that afternoon between Miss Ashton, Mr. Molson and your father?"

"I do not," she answered.

"From all you know of Mr. Ashton's temper and spirit of late which would you think the more likely that he remained away from dinner because he was very sad or very joyful?"

"I don't doubt for a moment. I think I know he was too joyful to eat his dinner."

"Did you hear what Miss Ashton confessed as to the passionate utterances between your father and Mr. Molson?"

"I did, sir."

"And you still think he was in a very happy frame of mind?" queried Mr. Jaffery.

"I am perfectly assured of it. My father was exceedingly joyful and happy as he left the drawing room that day."

"Why," said Mr. Jaffery, "this seems somewhat perplexing"—and for once a faint glimmer of a smile stole over his face—"you surely believe the statement as to the passionate utterances and the serious disagreement between your father and Mr. Molson?"

"Most assuredly I do, but I do not put the same interpretation upon them that my sister does, I know many things about my father and his inner life which no other living person knows, and I can interpret him better than my sister can."

"Do you think it possible, Miss Lucille, that your father could use passionate speech and appear to one

who did not understand him well to be in passion, and yet not be? Or to put it plainly could your father for a good and noble purpose—say a good and noble purpose —act a part?"

Miss Lucille dropped her gaze to the floor and a faint light—the dawning of a smile—stole into her eyes and cheeks as she answered meekly, "I think it is possible, sir."

Again Jaffery's gaze was fixed on Molson's face. The young man had risen from his seat, a vacant look upon his pale face, and stood staring into space for an instant, then realizing himself and his surroundings he sank to his seat, his face crimsoned with shame.

I had an impression all through this work of Mr. Jaffery's that this was but preliminary to something more serious, a little prelude before the real performance designed to instruct some of the witnesses as much as to assist the investigation, and that more serious work was laid out by Mr. Jaffery for Miss Lucille and I was not disappointed.

"I have still another question, Miss Lucille," said Mr. Jaffery, "when did you last see this revolver?"

The question was a cruel one, apparently a heartless one. To confront a lovely and sensitive girl with the weapon that had robbed her of her dearest friend and to ask a question in presence of strangers that might, or might not, imply some knowledge of the murder, seemed cruelty itself.

Yet, while the question in itself seemed outrageous there was much in Mr. Jaffery's manner that showed her he was far from cherishing any intention of causing her needless suffering. His quiet manner and his slow hesitating way did much to relieve the shock of the question.

As for Miss Lucille she bore it bravely and after a look at Miss Ashton in which her soul went out in affection for her sister, she turned her face deliberately away from her and said:

"I saw it at midnight, the night of the crime."

This produced the first genuine sensation of the investigation. Nearly everyone seemed to see in this

confession the opening of a clue which must lead us straight to the assassin.

The statement, nevertheless, seemed to be a painful surprise to all but the imperturbable Mr. Jaffery. In regard to others, nothing escaped him; in regard to himself nothing escaped from him. His face was the Sphinx and there was no alteration of manner, no rising or falling inflection of voice, no tell-tale smiles or frowns, to show what he thought or felt, save in his intentional softening of his question to Miss Lucille.

"Will you tell us," he continued, "where you saw the revolver and how you came to find it?"

"I found it on the hall stairs leading to the flat above."

On the suggestion of Mr. Jaffery Miss Lucille showed him and his associates the step near the top landing where the revolver lay in open sight.

"How did you come to discover it?" asked he.

"Helena was very nervous. We thought she would faint. I ran up the stairs for a bottle of smelling salts she keeps in her drawer and it lay in open sight before me near the landing."

"What was your thought and feeling on finding the revolver?" he asked.

She looked at him, a mute but powerful appeal upon her face, and he at once continued, "I will not pain you or trouble you more than I can help, but we must use our full power in investigating this dastardly deed."

"My first thought and feeling was one of horror, sir."

"Had you reason then or since for suspecting any person of the crime?"

"No, sir. I had none then. I have none now."

"Will you please tell us, then, why you took the revolver and secreted it?"

"I did not say I secreted it," she replied.

"No but you did, did you not? Now as you have no good motive for refusing to assist us in our difficult work and every motive for doing so, I am sure you will tell us all you know."

She seemed moved by this appeal and at once replied, "I took the revolver and hid it in a clothes closet on the second flat and later in the night placed it where it was

found behind the matting of one of the steps leading to the basement."

"But your motive in so doing. Miss Lucille? You surely had a motive."

"My motive, if I had one," she continued, "was to put the horrid revolver out of sight. I hated it. I wanted it out of my sight. I wanted it especially out of Helena's sight, in her present over-wrought condition."

"Had you not some other motive?" relentlessly continued Mr. Jaffrey.

"If I acted from any clearly defined motive in my own mind, and not from blind impulse, I did not want the thing in sight, especially I did not want Helena to see it, I did not want anyone to know it was on the steps leading to our private apartments."

"Then you did it to shield some one whom you believed to be innocent from suspicions?" he asked.

"No, some one whom I *knew* to be innocent," she immediately answered. "No one who knew our family could suspect any of its inmates; but the house was full of strangers; all sorts of rumors and suspicions arise at such times. I felt that strangers should not see the revolver there."

"So your motive was not to oppose the ends of justice but to spare unnecessary pain to the innocent?" said Jaffery.

She looked at him gratefully and answered:—

"I had no other motive, so help me heaven."

"You must, nevertheless, have conjectured in your own mind as to how the revolver came there. Can you tell us the best explanation that has suggested itself to you?"

"The guilty one may have found difficulty in secreting it where it could not be found, or preferred leaving it where it would point suspicion on the family, or, perhaps, planned either by himself or the aid of another to throw suspicion on my sister."

"I do not ask you to mention any one's name in suspicion. May I ask if you can suggest to yourself a plausible theory of some enemy of the family or of Mr. Ash-

ton endeavoring to throw suspicion upon some of the household?"

"I must refuse to give voice to any suspicions I could not justify even to myself," she said.

This finished Miss Lucille's second examination, and as from the first, so also from this, it seemed evident;

1st. That Miss Lucille saw the possibility of her sister being thrown under suspicion, not only from the revolver on the steps leading directly to her room, but also from other circumstances and that she feared this and was even willing to do considerable violence to her own feelings and run no little risk herself to save her sister this annoyance.

2nd. That she had in mind one or more persons who might assume or who had assumed an attitude of hostility to Miss Helena and who might seek to throw suspicion upon her.

Query:—Who can that person be? The problem is not for the reporter, it is one for Thomas Jaffery to solve. Yet I could not help but wonder what circumstance in the past life of the heiress, what known elements of her character, or what in her relationship to Mark Ashton and his family, could lend color to such a suspicion.

Miss Ashton was an adopted daughter, was recognized as the heiress, was a young woman of spirit and determination and, when incited to it, could act with an earnestness, vehemence, and some would say passion, in carrying out her strong will. Another fact, quite well known by this time, Miss Ashton was not fully in Mark Ashton's confidence. While loved and trusted as a member of his household and family, she did not share like Miss Lucille, his inmost secret life. Miss Ashton, too, in loving, loyal obedience to what she considered Mark Ashton's wishes had been living for some months a life of constraint, sorely tried at times, yet thoroughly devoted to her friend and benefactor, whom she loved and obeyed in many things she did not comprehend.

All these things were well known to Miss Lucille. Were these her sole reasons for the deep dread and un-

reasoning fear which had prompted her to acts of deception and to encounter great risks?

It was quite well known at this time to Mr. Jaffery and a few others that Miss Ashton was chafing under her restraints, impatient with delay after delay in promised explanations that seemed never forthcoming, and anxious to be admitted to the fullest confidence in the family secrets and responsibilities.

These were some, though possibly not all, of the problems in Jaffery's mind which he determined to solve, if possible, by one or more private interviews if the case revealed no new and startling features, and still continued perplexing after investigation.

The next to be interrogated was Mr. Molson, a young man well and favorably known in W——e as a teacher of violin, a very artistic performer on his chosen instrument, and also employed as assistant clerk in Mark Ashton Banking Company for the past five months.

Mr. Molson's appearance fully justified the reports of his recent illness. He came in company with his friend and foster-brother, Mr. Herbert Williams, barrister, and was encouraged and guided to a large extent by his counsel. Up to a certain point in his testimony he seems to have followed fully the directions and hints given him by his legal friend. At this point, judging by signs that passed between them, Mr. Molson manifested strong dissent from Mr. Williams' directions and apparently pursued his own way. They seemed to me like two men walking through a woods, the first traveller taking his cue entirely from the second until on reaching a certain part of the course, the first walks directly off from the prescribed course despite the protest of his friend.

This caught the attention of Jaffery, but one had to observe him very closely to see that he was paying any attention to the matter.

Mr. Molson's condition was one to excite compassion. To begin with he was in a highly nervous, overwrought state, and, as previously recorded, had several times been much startled by what he heard, particularly concerning Mark Ashton, and in certain instances had been so excited as to spring up under the intense feeling

aroused by some of the statements made. His weakness and suffering, judging from his emaciated appearance, the brightness of his eye, and the swaying of his figure as he leaned heavily at times on his friend, Mr. Williams, must have been apparent to all. Indeed there were not a few who had upon their faces a settled look of conviction, doubtless interpreting these indications as proofs positive of his guilt.

It was also interesting to note—as I did carefully—the attitude and demeanor of the heiress and Miss Lucille toward this witness. Miss Lucille sat, during all the painful ordeal with her eyes fixed upon him, beaming with evident interest, one might say affection, and smiling encouragement into his wan and wasted face. One might even say there was a boldness in her manner, a complete indifference in her mind as to what the world might think or say of her conduct (if her modesty, self-abasement and thorough sense of propriety were not generally well known). When one remembers that Mr. Molson had only been a clerk in Mr. Ashton's bank a few months and had seldom visited Ashton Hall except as a hired teacher or musician, and as a young man struggling with poverty could lay no claim to equality with the social set in which the heiress and Miss Lucille moved, the interest manifested by the Banker's daughter in her father's clerk presented a problem well worthy of study. Ah, well! no matter how old one grows or how wise, he will never be able to read the riddle of a woman's heart or to solve the enigma of a woman's conduct.

And yet, I was sure of one thing and it was this: it could not be explained by the tender passion. If the Banker's daughter had learned to love the Banker's clerk no force of circumstances could have induced her to manifest it so openly and so bravely to the public.

She, indeed, seemed oblivious of all around her but the witness undergoing his ordeal, so eager was she to show to him her full confidence and sympathy in the critical hour. A sister could have done no more for a brother in the darkest hour and trial of his life.

And every one seemed to realize this was a dark and trying hour for the young man. Reluctant as those inter-

ested in the investigation were to accept any thought of his guilt, and high as had been the estimate of his worth on the part of the general public, it could no longer be denied that unnumbered little incidents, insignificant or united effects, were, like the strands of a rope, weaving themselves around him in circumstantial evidence which might yet destroy all hope and life itself.

Mr. Molson seemed to realize this as, one after

The Attorney proceeded vigorously with his questions

ness, and sat with averted face like an immovable statue

der occasionally passed over her features.

during the long and harrowing scene, save that a shud-

Miss Ashton deliberately looked away from the wit-

fixed look of a most serious nature.

another, the damning facts were drawn from his own lips in the testimony.

Mr. Williams' face was not so hopeless, yet had a

at least inconclusive in themselves, yet strong in their

as soon as Mr. Molson had risen.

The interest was intense here, for it had been rumored about that an interview had been had in the drawing room on the day of the crime between Mr. Molson, the heiress and the Banker of a highly sensational and dramatic nature, and it was fully expected that Mr. Molson would be questioned upon the subject.

"How long have you been engaged with the Mark Ashton Banking Co.?"

"Since the 15th of August last."

"Were you acquainted with Mr. Ashton or any of his family before that date?"

"I was not."

"Explain to us the nature of your duties, hours of service, etc., in the bank."

Mr. Molson here gave a succint account of his work which it is unnecessary to transcribe.

"Have your relations with Mr. Ashton been agreeable and cordial?"

"They have been generally so," replied Mr. Molson.

"Is banking your chosen profession?"

"No, sir, I am a musician and only intended my clerk-

ship to continue until I got fairly established as a teacher of music."

"Did you purpose continuing with Mr. Ashton in the bank, if the crime had not been committed?"

"No, sir. I fully expected to have left Mr. Ashton's service the same night the crime was committed." (Sensation).

"Is it not customary to give a month's notice? Was it not part of your agreement?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, as you had not given the Banker the month's notice, how could you close your engagement so summarily?"

"I intended sacrificing my December salary in lieu of the month's notice."

"Would that have been just to your employer? Can you give us any good reason why you should sacrifice your salary for a month and put Mr. Ashton, perhaps, to some serious inconvenience when you might have avoided all this by giving due notice?"

"I did not intend leaving, at least not so soon. My mind was not made up until recently."

"Then you lead us to infer that very recent events decided you to sever your connection with the bank?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Mr. Molson.

"You intended devoting all your time thereafter to music?"

"Yes, sir."

"In this city?"

"No, sir—not permanently."

"Mr. Molson, as a matter of fact, had you not already made some arrangements for leaving the city?"

"I expected to leave W——e this week." (Sensation).

"And your arrangements were made without either acquainting your employer, or making any public announcement, or even apprising all of your pupils. Surely you must admit this requires some explanation, does it not?"

"I had good reasons, private reasons. I intended no injustice to any one. My pupils would all have been notified, but for this tragedy."

"Why were you leaving W——e?" continued the Attorney. "Your services were highly valued in the bank. You were offered, I understand, quite a substantial increase in salary. I am informed the Banker sought to make a permanent engagement with you. As a musician you are popular and I understand your class of pupils was rapidly growing. You had the patronage of some of our best citizens. Surely you must have had some powerful motive to induce you to leave all this. Can you not make your motives and your conduct clearer to us?"

"I did not like W——e. I wanted to travel. I purposed continuing my studies abroad for a time, then settling in New York."

"Were none of your friends apprised of your leave taking?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Williams knew and approved of my plans."

"Mr. Molson, you had some differences of opinion and some warm arguments from time to time with the Banker, did you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were these of a personal nature?"

"They were mostly on questions of policy concerning business operations," replied Mr. Molson.

"Tell us, Mr. Molson, how you, a junior clerk and only a few months in the bank, became concerned with the policy of the bank and at odds on this subject with the Banker?"

"Mr. Ashton frequently called Mr. Parish and myself into council on certain operations he had in view. As we were invited to participate and expected to carry out the plans laid down I felt I had a perfect right to express my opinion and denounce what I could not approve."

"Very good, Mr. Molson. But were these denunciations always confined to the policy of the bank? Did you not, on more than one occasion, denounce the Banker to his face and in bitter language? Did you not even threaten to leave him if he persisted in doing what he declared himself about to do?"

Mr. Molson dropped his gaze to the floor and answered:

"I did on two occasions tell the Banker my opinion of his plans, and I confess I did become personal on one occasion and told him my opinion of himself. Perhaps my words were bitter and uncalled for, I only know I spoke as I honestly felt at the time. On one occasion, too,I told him I should leave his service if he did what he declared he would do."

"Did this make any difference in the Banker's treatment of you?"

"I did not notice any perceptible difference."

"He sometimes invited you to his house?"

"Yes, sir, on a few occasions."

"You never noted any resentment on his part for your denunciation of his policy or of himself?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Then, I infer, it was not specially because of strained relations with the Banker you were leaving his service?"

"It was not."

"Your purpose of leaving and your preparations were made before your interview with the Banker on the day of the crime, were they not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Presuming, Mr. Molson, that you had no purpose of leaving the bank up to the hour of your interview with Mr. Ashton on the day of the crime, would you still have continued with him after that interview?"

"I would not have served another day," burst hotly from Mr. Molson's lips. He looked around and then seemed to realize he had been imprudent and too impulsive.

"You had an interview with Miss Ashton on the afternoon of the day on which the crime was committed? Did you call on that day by appointment?"

"No, sir."

"You called, however, to see Miss Ashton and——"

"No sir," replied Mr. Molson, I "did not call to see Miss Ashton. "I did not desire—I had no intention of calling on Miss Ashton—or of seeing any one but Miss

Lucille—and only for a moment—to get a book loaned to her, a birthday present from my best friend"—and his voice faltered and ended with something like a sob.

"Yet you had an interview with Miss Ashton, as we learn on good authority, and your interview lasted one hour and a half. Please explain."

"Miss Lucille was out and the girl took my request for the book to Miss Ashton instead."

"Mr. Ashton was present during a part of the interview, was he not?"

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Molson.

"Will you tell us, Mr. Molson, the subject of your conversation, the nature of that interview?" asked the Attorney.

"No, sir," came in clear ringing tones from the same point in the evidence where Miss Ashton made her emphatic refusal.

It was just at this point that Mr. Molson seemed to part company, metaphorically speaking, with his friend Mr. Williams. Every one could see the look of pained surprise on Mr. Williams' face, and afterward a mute appeal there to Mr. Molson to alter his decision. It was unavailing.

The question was repeated a number of times and in a variety of forms by the Attorney, but in vain. Mr. Molson was stubbornness itself.

After a few moments conversation between the State Attorney and Captain Sloane it was evidently determined to waive, for the present at least, all efforts at securing the information desired at this point and the questioning proceeded on a new track.

"Have you been a suitor for Miss Ashton's hand?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"No, sir," answered Mr. Molson.

"Then you affirm, positively, it was not for the purpose of making a proposal for her hand that you called there that eventful day?"

"It was not," replied Mr. Molson.

"And you made no such proposal for her hand that day?"

Mr. Molson stood silent and ignored the question utterly.

The question was repeated and Mr. Williams looked earnestly into the face of the witness but could get no answering look of recognition or favorable response in speech. If I read aright Mr. Williams' look it said: "Confess the truth; tell the whole truth; it will be better for you." Still Mr. Molson stood impassive.

"Were you a frequent visitor at Ashton Hall?"

"I was not," replied Mr. Molson.

"Were your visits there social visits or professional visits or partly one and partly the other?"

"My visits were nearly all professional. I was Miss Ashton's violin teacher."

"Were you not invited there to musicales, and did you not visit there socially?"

"I was under engagement to play at the musicales, but seldom met the family socially."

"Do you persist in refusing to speak as to the nature of your interview on the day of the crime?"

"I do, sir."

"Will you assert that on the afternoon of that day you did not exchange bitter words with the Banker in his drawing room?"

There was no answer.

"I understand you left Ashton Hall about five o'clock that afternoon. Is that correct?"

"I don't think it was as late as that—say between four and five o'clock," answered Mr. Molson.

"Will you say it was not as late as five o'clock?"

"I do not know the exact time, possibly it was five o'clock," answered Mr. Molson.

"You were excited at the time, you were excited over the interview with the Banker, you did not realize what time it was. Is that so?"

"It may have been."

Captain Sloane now undertook the questioning of the witness and his first question produced a decided surprise.

"Mr. Molson, on the afternoon when you had the

interview with Mr. Ashton in his drawing room, did you or did you not, lay your hands upon the Banker?"

A faint murmur of surprise ran round the group present. Mr. Molson was evidently surprised and alarmed and stood trembling for a moment. Miss Ashton shuddered visibly. Then Mr. Williams caught the witness' eye and this time with effect for he spoke up quickly and said, "I did, sir."

"Will you tell us the reason you did so?"

"He was leaving the room, he had falsely accused me, I was indignant. I seized him by the shoulder and swung him round to face me."

"Did you not threaten him?"

"I repelled his charges."

"What did you say? What were his charges? Did you not threaten him?" asked the Captain.

There was no answer. Mr. Molson had relapsed into silence. He had recovered his composure.

"Did you or did you not there propose to meet him again?" asked the Captain.

There was no answer.

"As a matter of fact you have not seen him since, have you?"

This time the surprise came from Mr. Molson as he straightened himself up and boldly answered, "I saw him again that evening in his private office about nine o'clock." (Sensation).

"Did you meet him by appointment?"

"No, sir."

"Was he expecting you?"

"I think so, do not know positively. I believe he was expecting me."

"What took you to his private office at that unusual hour?" asked the Captain.

"I went to apologize for what I had said and done in the afternoon."

"Was your interview a pleasant one?" asked the Captain.

"No, sir, it was not."

"Did any angry words, or words of reproach pass your lips there?"

There was no response, though Mr. Molson opened his lips once, he changed his mind and was silent.

"Did you threaten the Banker while you were with him?" No answer.

Here there came a look of utter hopelessness over Mr. Molson's face. He swayed a moment and fell gasping into Mr. Williams' arms.

It was five o'clock and the strain of excitement had been hard upon all, save, apparently, Mr. Jaffery.

It was decided here to adjourn the investigation again till next day at 10 A. M.

THE INVESTIGATION CONCLUDED. PRIVATE CONFERENCES.

JOHN GIBSON HUME.

The investigation was resumed promptly on the following morning and all who were present on the first day were in their places except Thomas Jaffery.

Why he did not attend no one seemed positively to know. It was reported that he had satisfied himself that it was a foreign assassin who shot Mr. Ashton and that it was useless, therefore, to pursue the course the detectives were now engaged in. Whatever his motives were he kept them religiously to himself.

One thing I do know, however, that whether Mr. Jaffery believed in the theory of a foreign assassin or not, he had not lost interest in the proceedings still going under the auspices of the police and state authorities, for that evening, after the second day's investigation, I was summoned to his house on Clark Street and made him a complete and accurate report of all the proceedings of the second day and was well paid for my services.

Mary Goodwin, the servant who usually attends the door at Ashton Hall, was summoned. Her testimony was a brief and unimportant one. She had been given permission by the housekeeper to attend a card party of her friends on New Year's eve. She was very busy that afternoon when not attending to her regular duties in her own room, fixing her wearing apparel for the night. She had, therefore, left the door attendance largely to her sister, Lizzie. After the party she came in about 11 o'clock and was admitted by a back basement door by her sister. She knew nothing of the afternoon callers and only heard of the crime about midnight. She was dismissed.

Lizzie Goodwin had a different story. She seems a strange contrast to her sister in appearance, manner, character. She had a bold face, an inquisitive look, and is

evidently much impressed with a sense of her own rights and her own importance. In contrast with her sister she seemed ready enough to talk. She looked at Mr. Molson with a keen triumphant expression on her face, as much as to say: "Ask no favors. You'll get none from me. I am going to show no mercy." Her story told in her own way and summarized was as follows:

Had been in service at Ashton Hall since May. Had no particular complaint to make of the family and wished she could say as much for the visitors. Considered a girl doing honest service as good as those she served and entitled to respect and gratitude and that her feelings ought to be respected as much as other people's. People had no right to accept faithful services and 'snub' those who rendered it. Not that she had been 'snubbed' by any of the family. But if the family had no right to 'snub' a servant, what right had a visitor?

She was employed to keep the hall and sleeping rooms in order, assist the cook or relieve her sister in attendance on the door. Her sister had special care of the library, parlor and drawing room, but she frequently assisted her in her work.

She happened to be in these rooms on the afternoon of December 31st, and this was how she learned of the interview between Mr. Molson and Miss Ashton and Mr. Ashton. She did not like being there, for once, while attending to duties in these rooms, she had been ordered out, insulted, 'snubbed,' you might say, and suspected of eaves-dropping.

Did she know about that interview? Yes, she would tell it and she would speak the truth if these were the last words she ever said.

No, she did not know the exact nature of the conversation between Mr. Molson and Miss Ashton. They were in the drawing room—she was in the parlor. She knew they talked a long time, an awful long time if Mr. Molson only wanted his book. She knew Miss Ashton was not well, and she remembered thinking she should have been in bed rather than sitting up entertaining visitors.

Yes, the door was shut between the parlor and drawing room.

Yes, she knew when Mr. Ashton came in. He came into the parlor and she went out into the hall and continued her dusting. Mr. Ashton did not stay long in the parlor, he soon entered the drawing room where she now heard Miss Ashton and Mr. Molson talking very earnestly.

Could she tell what was said after Mr. Ashton entered the drawing room? Yes, and she would explain how that happened. She was standing near the door, her hand on the knob at the time and she heard loud voices inside and before she knew it—she meant no harm—the knob turned and the door opened such a little way, just a tiny crack. She meant no wrong to anybody.

"Not at all, not at all," said Mr. Cameron, evidently bent on restoring the girl's sense of self-respect and self-possession.

Could she then see what was going on? Oh, yes, very well. Could she hear everything that was said? Oh, yes, very plainly. Didn't she disturb the speakers by opening the door? Not at all. Could she recall the exact words that they said? Yes, she could, and if these were the last words she ever uttered she would say nothing different.

Who was the first person that she heard speaking? Why, Mr. Ashton, of course. He spoke loud and clear and seemed to be very angry. He spoke with a kind of sneer these words: 'And has Mr. Molson done you the great honor, my daughter, to propose for your hand?'

No, she was not mistaken. She had repeated the words over and over again and wrote them down in her room and many more as well.

What else did Mr. Ashton say to Mr. Molson?

She heard Miss Helena speak but did not catch it all distinctly. She would not like to repeat it for fear she did not get it right. She spoke very sorrowful like, but Mr. Ashton seemed angry—not, not at Miss Ashton—at Mr. Molson and he pointed his finger at Mr. Molson, but looked at Miss Helena as he said, 'How much did Mark Ashton's gold have to do with his love?'

No, she did not recollect quite all Mr. Ashton said—though she had a good memory she thought. There was one thing more of Mr. Ashton's sayings she could recall. It was at the close of quite a long speech by Mr. Ashton and she remembered it because when he came to this point he roused himself up and seemed to grow so tall and he pointed again at Mr. Molson and said, "Under a pretense, seek to captivate an heiress and capture a fortune." She had the words written down in her scrap book.

Could she recall any words that Mr. Molson used? Oh, yes, she could. Mr. Molson spoke about as loud as Mr. Ashton. He was very angry, too. What did she see just then?

Why Mr. Ashton was turning away, as if to leave the room, when Mr. Molson sprang at him like a tiger. It was something Mr. Ashton said that seemed to make Mr. Molson wild and fierce. She thought when he sprang forward he would shake Mr. Ashton, but he did not. He seized him by the arm and swung him about and put his face to Mark Ashton's face and said, "Your charges are as false as though a devil framed them. At another time and in another way I will answer them before I leave this place forever."

Did she know the meaning of these words at the time? No, she did not but she studied over them and said to herself, this isn't the end of that quarrel. He'll come back to Mr. Ashton's private office to-night and then there'll be a scene. Yes, she had thought it all out and had said to Mary, 'I'll take your place in the hall to-night if you want to go to the party,' and so she did.

Yes, she knew very well when she let Mr. Molson in at night, what he had come for. She saw a great change had come over him but he wasn't a bit afraid. He walked straight from the hall down the steps into Mr. Ashton's office. No, she did not hear just what was said at the first between them, she had to go back and assist the cook on New Year's dinner. She came out shortly afterwards as soon as she could be excused and she could hear their voices from the hall-way. Mr. Ashton was much quieter she thought than in the afternoon, at least he did not speak so loudly. So was Mr. Molson, too,

till he got to a certain point, then he seemed to get very much excited for he raised his voice and she could hear distinctly every word he said after he raised his voice. The first part of the sentence must have been lower than the last for what she heard did not make sense without something going before.

Could she recall the words? Yes, she couldn't easily forget them if she had tried for they were "till the hour of your death, Mark Ashton!" (Sensation.)

Would she swear to that in Court? Yes, or in any place. She would swear it on a hundred Bibles if she was to die to-morrow. She had said them over often since then, and especially after the shooting of the Banker, "till the hour of your death, Mark Ashton."

During all this exciting statement, while the group of listeners were divided in feeling between disgust of the brazen-faced spy, only too glad to repay some real or fancied rebuke received at Mr. Molson's lips probably for former eaves-dropping, and the sensation of pained surprise produced by her positive statements of the very words of Mr. Molson and Mr. Ashton in the afternoon and evening, the young man sat like one stunned and lifeless. Doubtless the repetition of these statements came upon him as a shock and he realized under the present circumstances the full significance that would be attached to them and the certainty with which they would point suspicion directly upon himself as the murderer of the Banker.

At times a spasm of real suffering passed over his face, but for the most part he sat and heard as one who has already lost heart and hope and was beyond the power of pain and suffering, no matter what might occur.

Mr. Williams, his friend, listened with deep and apparently absorbing interest to the recital but kept himself well controlled.

I noted that at times the dark lustrous eyes of the heiress blazed with anger and again she would show that trembling of the hands and suffering in her face so manifest in all yesterday's proceedings.

Miss Lucille was the only one whose demeanor remained unchanged. She made no effort to hide her

interest in Mr. Molson, her admiration for him and her sympathy with him. This surprised the spectators as it had before, since it seemed so entirely out of harmony with her reputation for unobtrusive humility and the modesty of manner so generally attributed to her.

After the witness had been seated she was recalled and briefly questioned by Captain Sloane.

"Were you at the door when Mr. Molson left?" asked the Captain.

"No, sir, I did not let him out."

"Do you know when he left the office?"

"I believe he was leaving the office when he said the words, 'till the hour of your death, Mark Ashton,' for I heard his step on the stairs leading up to the hall," she said.

"Why didn't you remain and show him out?" asked the Captain.

"Well, he never liked me. He ordered me out of the drawing room one day when I was there and he was giving a lesson. He might have thought I was spying on him. So when I thought he was coming up to go out, I slipped down the hall as fast as I could."

"Did you hear or see any one else in the hall that night?"

"I stole back about ten minutes later and I heard nothing about the Banker's office or the hall near it, but I thought I heard some one in the back hall and I was afraid and went quickly down to my room in the basement."

The investigation was closed at one o'clock.

CONFERENCES BETWEEN POLICE, DETECTIVES AND OFFICERS.

Two days later I received a note from Captain Sloane commanding my attendance at the Police Headquarters that evening at eight o'clock to make official notes of a conference to be held by the officers and detectives.

On reaching the office I found there present Captain Sloane, Chief of Police; State Attorney C. H. Cameron, Mr. Buell, of the Detective force; Stephen Conrad and Patrick Donovan of the regular force and Thomas Jaffery, private detective.

The report of this conference is made from, but not identical with, notes of the proceedings taken while there. It seems needless to say that all the proceedings of the conference could not be made public.

The meeting resolved itself for the most part into a free and animated discussion of the statements that had been made in the last two days in the preliminary investigation. Some minor reports were handed in from detectives detailed for special work. The contents of Mark Ashton's desk, the fragment of the missing letter in Mark Ashton's hand at the time of the crime, and some answers to correspondence begun since the tragedy with a view to disclosing the plans and purposes of the Banker, were placed before the conference and briefly discussed. This feature of the work, however, received slight consideration as it was assumed to be the special work of Captain Sloane, Mr. Buell and Mr. Jaffery.

Reports came from Dr. Agnew through Captain Sloane that Mr. Ashton was showing remarkable vitality and would probably survive for a week or more, some of the indications were, indeed, favorable to recovery. While most wounds of the brain through shooting were fatal, men similarly wounded had been known to recover and regain apparent health and activity. So far, however, there was but faint signs of returning consciousness.

A list of twelve strangers in the city on the night of

the crime was handed in by Stephen Conrad. These were selected out of a much larger number as worth investigating with a view of discovering some clue to the assassin.

The question of careful surveillance of all inmates and parties connected with Ashton Hall and the Bank was discussed and some additions made to the men already engaged in such work. The State Attorney, Mr. Cameron, then asked the opinion of all present on the subject of making arrests.

Mr. Jaffery was on his feet at once and said:

"Gentlemen, a mistake at this moment might be fatal. I do not despair of being able to find and convict the criminal. If we arrest the guilty party before our evidence is complete, we tie our own hands in making a conviction. If we arrest the innocent—as I judge there may be some danger of doing—we cause much needless suffering. Pardon me for saying it, you are not ready to spring the net. I do not even know whom you propose to arrest. But unless you have much more evidence than I have seen, though you may possibly know the murderer, you cannot convict him. As the case now stands, there are surface indications of guilt in two or three directions. Think, I beseech you, of the danger of arresting the innocent, of the suffering and disgrace entailed. Think of the stigma you put upon a person by charging him with a heinous crime. You assume a tremendous responsibility in arresting a person on a charge of murder. Pause and reflect. Nothing will be lost by delay. On the contrary, we shall gather evidence more rapidly while the murderer is at liberty."

He took his seat and several arose and dissented from this view. The public were expecting arrests to be made and practically nothing had yet been done. This seemed to inspire the State Attorney who rose and said:

"Gentlemen, four days ago an atrocious crime was committed in our midst. What have we done? Heard a few statements, found the revolver and a few scraps of paper and the criminal in our very midst is yet free. Only one man could have committed the crime, so far as my judgment goes. Only in the case of one man is there an

apparent motive for the deed. This man, the victim and the weapon were all together at the hour or within a few minutes of the hour when the deed of blood was done. That man quarrelled with Mark Ashton on the afternoon of the crime. He had an altercation with the Banker again in the evening, using threatening language on both occasions. He knew where the revolver was, had access to the room, and, however excellent his past character may have been, carried away by fancied insults of the afternoon, and by his refusal by the heiress, in a frenzy of love and passion, shot the Banker.

"Gentlemen, where are your eyes? Where's your reason? Could any one doubt his guilt who saw him to-day? What interpretations could any one put upon Molson's nervousness and fright, except guilt? Why is he silent when he should speak? He should be arrested this hour before he has a chance to escape, or, perhaps, do violence to himself?"

Captain Sloane could not favor the immediate arrest of Mr. Molson, although he agreed with the Attorney as to the indications of his guilt. He was now seriously ill at "The Willows," the residence of John Eben Williams in the country. He favored his arrest as soon as he was able to be brought to the city. Meantime he would see that there was no possibility of escape.

Detective Buell was not fully satisfied of Molson's guilt—though he admitted there were many indications of it. He favored delay.

Mr. Jaffery pleaded again for delay. On being asked if he knew the criminal, he answered, "The criminal is a foreigner. I shall know where to find him and shall do so as soon as we collect enough evidence to convict him. We require time for this. I pledge my professional reputation that he shall not escape.

"But, pardon me, of all absurd conclusions I ever heard drawn from evidence and investigation, the charge that Herman Molson shot the Banker is the most absurd and ridiculous. It surpasses my comprehension how you could entertain the thought for a moment.

"Forbear, gentlemen, putting a stigma on the life and character of one of the noblest young men I ever met."

The meeting broke up without any unanimous judgment being reached.

Within a week, however, the Attorney ordered the arrest of young Molson. He was taken at "The Willows" and lodged in jail at W——e. When seized it is reported he tried to hide, then to destroy, his Diary, but was caught before his efforts were successful. As this Diary gives in a large measure the history of one of the chief actors in our drama, we insert it entire up to its last and imperfect entry.

DIARY OF HERMAN MOLSON.

(Found by Detective Conrad in Mr. Molson's room at "The Willows," at the time of his arrest for the murder of Mark Ashton.)

"The Willows," July 11th, 18—, Co., N. Y.

Twenty years of age to-day! Surely, it is time for me to interrogate the past and scan the future.

For some years I have thought seriously of putting my life story into writing and recording my experiences from time to time. Not that there is anything great in the way of past achievement or future hopes, but solely for my own benefit and for enjoyment in years to come. I think such a record may induce me to study my own experience more, and I have an idea that each life is a revelation of truth, if we know how to interpret it. Then I think a journal of one's experiences, and especially a diary in which the inner life is portrayed, may become a sort of companion to a lonely person, and surely I am one.

In such a private journal one may tell secrets he would not give to his bosom friend, and I fancy from such a journal one may in time realize a sort of companionship, even an imaginary sympathy, which at least is better than the cold indifference of the world of strangers.

I am very impressional and often find myself doing what I had not planned and things, too, for the doing of which I could give, if questioned, no satisfactory reason. I often feel myself urged—is that too strong a word?—at least inclined to do things and yet fail to follow the inclinations or prompting. I have, on a few occasions, felt such an impulse to do some act, something heretofore unthought of, that I could scarcely have felt a stranger inclination if a loving friend had besought me with urgent words to do it.

Why should a person feel suddenly prompted to take one rather than the other of two paths, equally short, equally pleasant, equally advantageous? Why should one get a sudden and strong impulse to go somewhere,

write some letter, say some word, and all heretofore uncontemplated, and for the doing of which one can give himself no satisfactory reason?

One thing I have, however, noted and it is this: When I follow my impressions I am generally satisfied with the result and when I do not I often regret it. Good comes to me from following these mental impulses and inclinations.

So I am following my impressions in beginning this Journal.

I know I am not making a very fine or even orderly introduction, but as these pages are solely for my own personal use, a sort of connecting link between the yesterdays and to-morrows of my life, what difference will the style of composition make?

The very irregularity of my expressions, the spontaneous character of my thoughts and statements, will reveal myself more fully than any copied style of writing.

I have another reason; I hope these pages in some future day may assist me, though I cannot now see how, to some solution of the mystery of my life!

All life is mystery. Every life has its unsolvable problems. Who, for example, can explain the origin of our impressions, such as I have described above? My life in a very special sense is a mysterious one. I have never known a father's care, a mother's love, the sweet and tender affection of brothers and sisters. I have been a pensioner upon the kindness and goodness of a family, the wife and mother of which I am told is some distant relation of my mother. I have had, up to the present, a small allowance sent me quarterly from a law firm in New York City and representing a remnant of a once colossal fortune which my father owned before he passed away. My mother died before him.

My allowance comes regularly from the New York firm, but is first transmitted to them from a distant relative and friend of my father's in Scotland. With it I receive several times a year a letter from my "Unknown Friend." It is typewritten always and signed only by the same mysterious words, "Unknown Friend." It is generally without date and locality.

These letters contain only one text and one sermon: they are warnings against excessive love of, or devotion to, wealth. They are strong denunciations of covetiousness and pen pictures describing the evils of inherited money and the curse of miserliness.

It has seemed to me for years (and many and many times I've thought of it during my struggling college days) what a grim kind of irony it is to send perfervid descriptions of the curse of gold and lectures on the responsibilities of wealth to a poor orphan who has scarcely enough money to buy his violin strings! Perhaps someone is enjoying a joke at my expense.

I cannot understand the secrecy. This weighs heavily upon my soul. If the "Unknown Friend" knows my family history, why does he hide it from me? Why does he refuse to correspond direct with me? Why hide his name and his locality? Why does he not give me some knowledge of my father and mother? They must have relatives and surely I have a right to know who they are.

Perhaps my father was a criminal, perhaps some events are kept from me concerning my father or mother, or both, which would pain and hurt my self-respect. I think I could bear that or anything rather than this awful uncertainty. Sometimes I wonder if I know my own name.

I have made many inquiries of the kind friends with whom I have been brought up, the Williams family. They all know but little. The children I feel sure know practically nothing and whatever Mr. and Mrs. Williams know they will not tell. It seems I have been with them since I was three years old, since the time of my mother's death. My father, so the tradition runs, was very wealthy once but lost nearly all his wealth and leaving New York for Europe was missed only when the boat arrived at some French port and reported lost at sea.

When I enquire of Mr. and Mrs. Williams, I am told they really know but little and that little would not make me happier to know. The "Unknown Friend" had, it seems, some authority and instruction from my father in case anything happened to himself, and as he represents

my father, both Mr. and Mrs. Williams and the law firm follow his instructions. When I write to the lawyers (Gregson, Mclaren & Clark) I always receive prompt and courteous replies but they amount to little more than pleas of ignorance or of temporary restriction under orders of the "Unknown Friend."

Once, between five and six years ago, I became so burdened with the mystery hanging over my life that I resolved to face the New York agents and demand an explanation of my past and find out if I had any living relatives. Mr. Williams made strenuous exertions to dissuade me from the journey, but, failing to do so, went with me. Alas! My visit ended in failure as I might have foreseen, though I gained by inference a few ideas about the "Unknown Friend" which I believe to be correct.

An old gentleman, the senior partner I think they called him, received me in his private office. He had a kind face and a very tender heart I know from his conversation, and he asked me in gentle well modulated tones what he could do for me.

"I came, Mr. Gregson," I said, "because I want to know something about my mother and my father and myself and my people, if I have any. I think I have a right to know, and I think too," I said it with some feeling, "you ought to tell me."

"Well, my dear boy," said he laying his hand upon my shoulders, "I agree with you thoroughly, you have a right to know all that can be known. It would give me great pleasure to give you this information if I had it. I know only a very few facts myself and these not bearing particularly upon the points you mention. They are facts confided to us professionally and I am not permitted to speak of them."

"Did you know my parents?" I asked.

"Unfortunately, I did not, my boy," he said with much kindness.

"They are both dead?" I asked.

"Your mother died when you were three years of age. Your father was missing from the passengers of a vessel which sailed from New York the following year. It is presumed on all hands that he was drowned, whether by

accident or suicide caused by grief over the loss of your mother, is not known. So far as I know the "Unknown Friend," as he styles himself, is the only surviving relative of your father's family, and received authoritative instructions from your father concerning you in certain eventualities. What he knows of your past history or of your family he has, no doubt, some good reason for keeping to himself. That he is a man of intelligence, a warm friend of your family and a true friend to you I cannot doubt. Indeed, I know some facts that would convince you—were it at all necessary to present them—to prove his personal interest in you. One I will give you to satisfy you of his interest in your welfare. When he discovered how small was the remnant of your father's fortune, saved from the financial wreck, he voluntarily added an equal amount himself and by his act of judicious investment he hopes to continue your allowance till you are of age, increasing it necessarily while you are seeking your musical education, after which there will be no resource to you but your own exertions."

This was proof positive that I had in my "Unknown Friend" one who loved me and was in a fashion trying to do the best to help and guide the orphan child committed to his care. It was consoling in a way. But it did not solve the many mysteries thrown around my case—unnecessarily I thought—or satisfy my longings for communion with my own kin.

"Have I any brothers or sisters?"

"None that I know of," he answered.

"Have you ever seen the 'Unknown Friend?'" I asked.

"I have not."

"Nor my father?"

"One member of our firm saw your father and entered into engagements with him before his fatal voyage. This was one of my former partners who died seven years ago."

"Then there is no one connected with your firm who can describe my father to me?"

"None of my present partners have ever seen him" he answered.

"Can you tell me, Mr. Gregson," I asked, "any good

reason why this 'Unknown Friend' refuses to correspond direct with me? He certainly knows much more of my family history than your firm. A single letter might explain this mystery, set my doubts at rest and save all this needless questioning and suspicion."

"My dear boy, he only can explain," said Mr. Gregson. "I have been led to think he was carrying out instructions from your father and that some day you may learn more. Probably I am mistaken in this. Perhaps, I know not, there may be secrets in the family life which your father preferred you should never know.

"But why be curious about a dead past when a living present is yours and a successful future may be before you? You have youth, prepossessing appearance, talent and can win your own way in life. Turn your face resolutely towards the future. Let the dead past bury its dead. Act, act in the living present. Be a worker, not a dreamer of dreams. You have a grand opportunity of showing what a young man of spirit, courage and energy can do without the help of friends. In this way I am sure you will soonest find peace of mind and that happiness we all seek."

I thanked him for his advice but still pressed home my questions.

"You say, Mr. Gregson, that you have reason to believe this 'Unknown Friend' is acting under my father's instruction. Have you any idea what could lead my father to cut me off from knowledge of the family history and why the 'Unknown Friend' writes to me so much about the curse of money? Do you think this a part of my father's instructions?"

"I may tell you this much," said Mr. Gregson, "but no more. I think I am not violating the spirit of my instructions when I say that your father had a very changeful and sorrowful life. From some of his own experiences and the experiences of others in the family, he derived a horror of inherited money. He came to look upon it as an awful temptation and in most cases a positive curse. He formed the notion that the only way to learn the value of money to one's self, the right use of money for others and the way to preserve money when

once acquired, was to earn it by sturdy, honest toil, either manual labor or some other department of human endeavor which was equally necessary to the world's progress and happiness. He preached that young people should be taught to trust in and rely upon themselves and never receive money which they had not earned until they had learned by experience how to use it for their own good and the good of others. This was a sort of hobby with him—and I tell you frankly—I am very much of your father's opinion."

Then after a brief pause he continued:

"What are you going to do with yourself? Have you chosen a profession? What do you like to study most? What do you like to do best of all?"

"Music," I cried out, "is my one ambition and the greatest delight of my life."

"Music, then, it shall be," said he, "with this provision that after you have taken your music course you shall enter upon it as a profession to gain your livelihood thereby. Or, failing in that, turn your hands to any honorable employment and become one of the world's honest workers, not an idler or a drone in society."

I readily agreed to this and the next fall in company with a companion much older than myself, whom the lawyers had found for me, sailed for Europe and entered upon the serious study of the violin in Leipsic. My allowance was sufficiently increased to cover all expenses of board and tuition but no large surplus, yet sufficient for actual expenses, so that I am not recording any complaint.

I spent over five years there and of my success I will leave my teachers and others to speak. I worked very hard and enjoyed not only the instruction but especially the association with musicians and the privileges of hearing the very best, not only in solo playing but also in concerted music. I think if I had possessed wealth and had had the direction of my own affairs, I would have remained ten years in place of five. As my progress had won such recognition and I was considered competent both to perform in public and to give instructions, and especially, as I had a suspicion that part of my expenses,

perhaps the greater part, was supplied through the liberality of my "Unknown Friend," I came home five months ago to follow Mr. Gregson's advice and make a career for myself.

I had overworked and so have been having a delightful rest and visit combined at "The Willows," which home I now appreciate more fully than ever before.

And what a change I found in five years! My playmates of earlier years have grown into the stalwart man and two beautiful women of to-day. Herbert is already a practising lawyer in W——e. Laura, the eldest daughter, has graduated from the Women's College in E——, and Maud is soon to finish her course in the Young Ladies' Academy. Laura has become a fine musician. We have spent nearly all our evenings since my return in impromptu concerts, especially Saturday and Sunday nights when "Herb" is at home. Herb is a fine bass and I carry, they say, a good tenor, and Laura and Maud contralto and soprano, while Mrs. Williams is one of the best accompanists I have met out of professional life.

The family seem proud of my achievements and never lose an opportunity of expressing their gratification over my Leipsic course and their deep and tender interest in my future.

As far as love and sympathy from friends can supply the lack of parental care and guidance and affection, I have had much cause for gratitude.

So I came here for a few months of rest and recreation before trying my powers in the great, busy, bustling world. I have lounged about, novel in hand, sauntered about the trout brooks of the neighborhood and done little else save an hour or two of daily practice to keep my hand on good terms with my violin. I have really been of little use to the world for the past four months, having only two things to my credit; I played a sonata on my violin for a church concert in R——,and have supplied many good messes of trout for Mrs. Williams' dainty breakfasts.

Now I am stronger than ever and I am trying to fix my gaze resolutely toward the unknown future. My past is a Sphinx with a stony face, absolutely refusing to

answer my heart questions. My future is a kingdom to conquer and to possess, and I shall conquer it.

Speaking of the Williamses, why should I not set down here and now what I know of them and at least record my gratitude?

The family consists of five members: John Eben Williams, Mrs. Mary Louise Williams, the son Herbert, three years older than I am, Laura and Maud, twenty and eighteen years, respectively. I hardly know how to describe Mr. Williams' occupation. Perhaps, "gentleman farmer" would approach as closely to a true description as any other language. He owns several farms, has the oversight of many more, collects his rents, lives in great comfort and has frequent business in W——e, where Herbert is establishing a law practice. He is a kind and thoroughly good man, very domestic in his nature, and pays all the deference to his wife that a loyal subject would to his queen. And well he way, for Mrs. Williams is no ordinary woman. She is forty-two years of age whilst he approaches fifty. I know her exact age and shall record on these pages a few facts and a few impressions concerning this Queen of "The Willows." To begin with, she must have been twenty years ago a woman of surpassing beauty for even to-day her face, form and carriage would excite instant attention and win admiration in any circle, however distinguished. She is above the average height, finely moulded, graceful in walk and manner with a very sweet and expressive face and eyes full of the light and love of summer.

I must here record a persistent impression which haunts me, and always when I am near her, and that is, that she is connected in some way with my past, and, deny it as she may, knows some, if not all, of the circumstances which make my present life so mysterious and my future so cheerless. Another thing, when I am near her that sense of loneliness which is the prevailing mental habit of my life, wears away; I seem to be surrounded by friends, who, though unseen, are sensibly near me; I feel borne in upon me those subtle waves of sympathy and love which suggest companionship and the purest joys of home affection. But what am I writing? Surely if

these lines should become public I might well be charged with insanity!

It is a fact, however, that Mrs. Williams' presence produces on my soul nature the same result that good music does; both lift me into a realm where the world of sense loses for a time its hold upon me; it is a spiritual intoxication if you will, in which I see and hear and sense a new realm of existence. I often wonder whether Longfellow's beautiful lines really express a truth, or only a fanciful conception, when he says: "The spirit world around this world of sense floats like an atmosphere."

One little incident I will recall here, though I am under pledge never to give it publicity, while it is fresh in my memory for it may have a value to me in future years assisting to unravel the tangled skein of my life.

It occurred but a few evenings before my departure for Leipsic. Mr. Williams and the children were in town purchasing some necessities for my outfit and some little parting souvenirs to remind me of their love when far away among strangers.

Mrs. Williams had been suffering from a nervous headache and had fallen asleep on the sofa in her parlor. I sat in the adjoining sitting room and was spending the most sorrowful hours of my life. I was parting with my only friends and was going out alone into a world of strangers. I sat facing the fireplace, my head upon my hands, my elbows on my knees, and was sobbing as only an orphan can who was putting far behind all the little joys and comforts he had found in life. Perhaps I should here make a confession to myself of a very singular habit I had formed. Probably I am the only mortal guilty ot it—if guilt there be in it—a habit too, that most religious people would condemn—that of praying to my mother in heaven rather than to the Almighty. I hardly know when or how I formed it. God has always seemed so great and so far away and so unrelated to all my little cares and sorrows—but my mother, I know if she could hear would listen and appreciate and sympathize and help me. Ever since I was a child, I have prayed to her when I was lonely, or sick or in trouble. Yet my mother was hardly a memory to me, only a faint recollection of a

beautiful dying woman propped up among the pillows while I was lifted up to kiss her pallid cheeks.

So I sat there alone in my grief, my heart breaking and my eyes suffused with tears and kept talking as it were unto her: "Oh, mother, your boy is so lonely. He is leaving all his good and true friends who have been so kind to him. He is going out among strangers alone. Oh, mother, comfort me!"

Then I recalled some words of a beautiful poem by Emma Rood Tuttle, which must have been the soul language of some poor, bereft orphan like myself, hungering for the love and companionship of a mother gone on before, and I repeated these over to myself:

"Softly a prayer was breathed into my being;
Sacred with love was the sighing refrain,—
'Father, my Father, all-wise and all-seeing,
Send me the soul of my mother again.

Open the gates where she walked into glory,
Let her come back like her dear self again,
Crownless and harpless, and hark to my story
Full of such loneliness, doubting and pain.'

'Go,' sang my fellow immortals; 'all heaven
Knows not a labor more sacred than this;
Love's precious chain is not tarnished nor riven;
Heaven and earth link in sorrow and bliss.'"

And I wondered if these teachings were true and the spirits of our departed friends really know of our joys and sorrows, and if my mother at that hour knew and sympathized with me and was permitted to draw near me.

I was so self-absorbed I did not notice any movement on the part of Mrs. Williams until I heard the swishing of her dress upon the carpet just behind me. Before I could look up her arms were around my neck, her lips pressed kisses on my forehead and cheeks and her voice (I hardly recognized it so low and tremulous was it with emotion) fell on my ear in these memorable words:

"Oh, my son, my beautiful boy! Take courage, you

have many more friends than you know. Many are interested in you and are praying for you. Don't be sorrowful, but courageous. You will succeed beyond all your expectations at Leipsic. You must yet pass through great trials but afterwards will come the triumph. You will be tried as gold in the furnace. But after the suffering and darkness will come joy and gladness. All will——be——well——in——the—end, in——the—end——."

Here she suddenly aroused herself, pushed me from her, and as quickly and noiselessly as possible glided back into the parlor and resumed her position on the sofa.

Shocked by her language and conduct I began asking myself what it could mean. Why had she addressed me as her "son," her "boy" and presumed upon such familiarity so utterly out of harmony with the usual manner of Mrs. Williams? Could it be?—but no, that was impossible! But great as my astonishment had been it was even greater when a few minutes afterwards Mrs. Williams arose and coming into the room where I sat, drew up her chair beside me by the fire, and without the slightest trace of any agitation in voice or manner, or the faintest indication of any embarrassment, began to talk to me quite calmly about my preparations for leaving and to enquire about my health.

Now Mrs. Williams had always been the very soul of candor and sincerity in her language and conduct up to this hour, but I could not help regarding her present conduct as a bit of good acting. Here is evidence, I thought that Mrs. Williams is deeply interested in me. She has yielded to her impulses and said more than she intended. She knows more of me and my history than she has ever told. This is my opportunity—the last I will have for a long time—and I will embrace it and use it to the utmost.

"Mrs. Williams," I said, "you are my good, kind friend, and I owe more to you than I can ever repay. Tell me then—there are so many things I want to know and cannot know—tell me this one thing. Tell me what you meant a moment ago by calling me your 'son,' your 'boy?' "

"Why," said she, a sudden agitation stealing over her quickly paling countenance, "I never—did I? When did I call you my boy?"

I was impatient. I could not see how she could have forgotten it in a few minutes, and she certainly could not have done it in her sleep.

"Mrs. Williams," I said, "you know very well that not ten minutes ago you came out of that room, threw your arms about my neck, and kissed me several times and called me your 'boy.' You were weeping as you did so and your tears are still upon my cheek. Tell me——"

"Oh," she cried, turning deadly pale, "don't—don't speak of it—you hurt me so—" and putting her hand to her heart she fell in a faint to the floor.

She soon recovered, however, and became perfectly calm, and calling me to her side, said, "Herman, I cannot explain, if I used such language—and I presume I did or you would not say so—I cannot tell you why I did so. There are so many strange things in life; you could not understand them even if they were told to you. One thing I will tell you. I am subject to peculiar experiences; some would call them spells of sickness or hallucinations—it matters not what you call them—and in these I say and do what I am not conscious of at the time, and do not remember afterwards. Forget what I said to you, I beg of you."

"On one condition," I said, determined to make the most of my opportunity, "I will forget what has occurred and trouble you with no more questions. Tell me at least this much. Was there anything to cause me shame in connection with my birth?"

"No, no, a thousand times no!" she said vehemently. "Your parents were among the noblest in the land and you were the idol of their hearts. There—I will say no more."

She never mentioned the matter to me again, and what is more, I have never had, whether from chance or design I do not know, a private conversation of more than a moment or two with Mrs. Williams since that hour.

Mr. Williams once referred to the incident just as I was leaving for Europe, and explained that his wife was subject to these peculiar nervous attacks, and that in these attacks, she appeared at times to labor under the hallucination that she was another person and would assume to speak in their behalf. It seemed to be a painful subject with him and he evidently wished to preserve this fact from the public. After some further explanations, none of which seemed very clear to me, he went on: "You, Herman, are now almost a man grown. You are a member of our family and are always to consider this your home and, of course, you feel an interest in the family honor and reputation. You are a young man of discretion and good judgment and I know you will—without my asking it—respect the privacy of our family life and never mention this peculiar incident."

And I gave him my promise and, of course, intend to honorably keep it.

I must here record a confession. I played "detective" in the Williams home for an hour one day—this was some months before I left for Europe. I shall not attempt to justify myself, for I feel I could not. But if this Diary is to be a fair picture of my life why should I not put into it the shades as well as the lights of my character?

This is how it came about. I had been reading in a New York paper an account of an infidel lecture, in which it was stated that the Bible declared "the iniquity of a man is better than the good deeds of a woman," and that "iniquity cometh from a woman as moths come from a garment." Both of these statements struck me as so novel and preposterously absurd that I could not for a moment accept them as Bible passages. On glancing again at the account, however, I saw that the book, chapter and verse of the first statement was given. So I determined at once to verify the quotation or satisfy myself it was a misstatement. I found the reference was to Ecclesiasticus XLII, chapter, and therefore belonged to the Apocrypha and could only be found in very old editions of the Protestant Bible or in the Douay version. I at once asked Mrs. Williams if she would give me a

Bible containing the Apocrypha, explaining for what purpose I desired it.

"Why, yes," she said, with her usual cheerful kindness, "our old family Bible has the Apocrypha. Maud will get it for you."

Then an instant later, I heard her call out—and there was quite another tone in her voice—"Never mind, Maud dear, I will get it for him."

She went into the library and, after quite a long delay, returned with it, wiping the dust from its cover.

Now, what had changed Mrs. Williams' mind so suddenly? I noted both the change of determination and the changed tone of voice. And why should she have taken so long to bring out a single volume, a large volume and, therefore, easily found, from an adjoining room? I was pondering these queries in my mind, during the long period in which I was turning over the leaves of the volume to find the book and chapter I wanted—for I was not so familiar with the book, as I fear I should have been—when I noticed a page torn from the Family Record. Two things were at once apparent to me in the hasty glance I gave the page. The leaf had been torn in haste and by a person under the influence of considerable excitement, for it was not torn evenly, but in such a manner as to leave a ragged and uneven margin still held near the binding. And part of the paper still retained by the binding not only had an uneven margin but had been split for a certain distance from the points of separation. From these facts and the fresh, uncolored surface of the split sections of the paper, it was quite evident, even to my hasty glance, that Mrs. Williams had torn out a part of the Family Record.

What was she hiding from me? What facts were there recorded she did not wish me to see? I determined, if possible, to find out. As a precaution I thought it well to give Mrs. Williams no reason to think I had discovered the defacement of the family record.

So I returned the Bible shortly afterwards, discussed volubly the passages I had looked up and, I think, lulled to sleep any stray suspicion that I had seen the torn page.

A week later my opportunity for search came. I

reasoned that Mrs. Williams would not destroy the abstracted page but lay it aside, and as the family were all out at this time, I began a systematic search and after about twenty minutes was rewarded by finding the torn page doubled and laid between some music sheets in the bottom of a library drawer. It told me nothing of note save that she herself was born in New York City on the 28th day of August, 18—, and that her maiden name was Mary Louise Molson!

And so my good friend, the best earthly friend I had, wished most ardently and anxiously to keep from me the knowledge of the fact that she and I bore the same family name! But why?

Another mystery added to the innumerable mysteries surrounding my life. Another problem to be solved and another perplexing question to puzzle my poor brain over!

My earliest recollections are interwoven with a bright, sunny room, full of objects of interest to children—books, pictures, playthings, ornaments and a hobby horse and a small table.

With these I associate in my memory pictures, now so obscured as to be almost undecipherable, a sweet, placid-faced lady, ample in proportions and always attired in light clothing, her head adorned with a white cap. That this could have been my mother, I do not for a moment think, as, when her image rises into mental vision, my lips unconsciously seem to form the words, and my inner ear to hear them, "Aunt May," or "Aunt Mary," probably the latter contracted in my childish speech to "May."

This scene lives with me ever among the few treasures of an early memory, and it must refer to a time, shortly before, or at the very time my mother passed away and the home was broken up. I feel satisfied it was about the time when my young life was committed to the care of Mrs. Williams.

I was, I remember well, on that bright morning mounted on my hobby-horse and filling the room with my shoutings when "Aunt May" came in. I had never before seen her in such sorrow, and I do not think I

have ever seen since such a picture of utter and despairing grief.

She was very pale, and tottered as she walked with her hand upon her heart. She looked at me in my childish glee with such a look of unspeakable anguish in her face that, child as I was, I instantly comprehended the fact that some terrible calamity was at hand.

I think I asked her some questions—probably what made her look so sad—when she fell into a fit of uncontrollable weeping and seizing me in her arms cried out, "Oh, my poor Herman, my poor darling. Oh, you poor forsaken boy!" Then, after controlling her grief, she carried me to the bedside of a lady, whom I seemed to then know and recognize but of whom I had seen but little, probably owing to her illness. She could not have entered much into my young life, as my memory of her is very indistinct and not nearly as clear as of "Aunty May."

I remember this well, though, that on the occasion of my being taken to the sick room—probably the death chamber—there was a large number in the room and their very solemn manner deeply impressed me.

Lying against the pillows which propped her up in the high bed, with her soul in her large sorrowful eyes, watching eagerly our entrance, lay a beautiful woman. She put her arms around my neck as the nurse lifted me up beside her, fondled my curly head, and bending over she embraced me tenderly, kissed me eagerly a number of times and then, on a motion of her hand, they took me quickly away. I have generally thought, though I have sometimes doubted, that she was my mother.

I have now spent all my spare time for some evenings in writing up this lengthy introduction. Other past experiences will no doubt occur to me later and I shall put them on record as they occur. I find I have made no date entry since the first, nor have I recorded my beautiful birthday presents—an elegant edition of "Songs without Words" from Laura and Maud, a costly set of Shakespeare from Herbert and a purse well filled with gold coins from Mr. and Mrs. Williams.

Heaven repay these true and unselfish friends! I fear I can never do so.

After this I fully intend to be a little orderly and regular in my entries—unless some new trout brook should be discovered, or I should fall into Cupid's net, or inherit a fortune or—change my mind.

"The Willows, July 23d, 18—.

The way to perdition is paved, they say, with good intentions. My intentions certainly were good when I promised regular attention to this journal, but (here my human nature shines out) I am going to put the blame on another. Only to present the true manly characteristics I should put the blame on a "woman," whereas I have only Squire Williams as a scapegoat.

I have been with him four days by invitation, inspecting his farms, driving through the charming country, and delighted with the change of scene and the surpassing beauty of the landscape. I have found a new trout brook near W——d and this should be, to any reasonable person, full and satisfactory explanation of, and apology for, my neglected journal.

I caught eighteen speckled beauties out of one hole—have promised to take Herb there next time.

"The Willows," July 25, 18—.

Herb is home for a brief holiday, and we went fishing yesterday and found even finer trout and more of them farther up the glen. We brought home fifty-three. Shades of Isaac Walton, what a glorious time we had! Herb is a prince of good fellows, a real royal whole-souled friend and companion. Out of all the young men I've met in Europe or this country give me Herb for a comrade and friend. He is such "jolly company"—sees the funny side of everything and of everybody—is full of droll stories and with all his fun and frolic is a serious-minded and high-principled young man. He ought to be almost perfect, with such a mother! He says I must settle down now and make a career for myself, and had better come to town with him and make a start.

"The Willows," July 23, 18—.

I have just received in the firm's large blue envelope a note from Gregson, McLaren and Clark, enclosing a letter from my "Unknown Friend." It is upon Irish Linen post and carefully typewritten. I think I will transcribe it in full:

Mr. Herman Molson,

Dear Young Friend.—I am glad to learn from our agents that you are fast recuperating after your hard and very successful work at Leipsic. Your honors there have rejoiced me and the few surviving friends of your parents, and lead us to confidently expect your future will be marked by the same earnest application to duty and rewarded with the same success. I presume you are now qualified for teaching and as you are, I understand, entering on your twenty-first year, without doubt you shortly expect to begin your chosen profession and make yourself independent of all help from others.

Now that you have successfully completed your course, I think it a duty I owe you to inform you of a fact or two which I kept from your knowledge while you were undergoing the strain of severe study and the ordeals of public performance before severe critics and masters. It is this: that the slender remnant of your father's estate was quite insufficient to carry you through your college course, and it gave me great pleasure, at some little self-sacrifice, to advance about £100 per year for the last three years from my own meagre fortune. Please understand I am not presenting any claim, and shall never accept anything in return. I am mentioning this to you solely for the purpose of guarding you from any baseless hope that further aid would come to you from your father's estate.

As I was charged by your father to impress upon you and have frequently done so, so now I again remind you of the "Curse of Unearned Money." Your father's frequent statement to his friends in life, expressing his deep conviction, one burned into his very soul by dreadful family tragedies and sufferings, was this:

"The only rightful way to receive money is to earn it

by honest toil, paying one hundred cents in labor value for every dollar received. Inherited money is generally accursed. No one knows how to use a fortune aright, or how to preserve a fortune, who has not himself acquired it by honest methods." As you are now approaching your majority, a period in which many young men begin to think about matrimony, I feel it incumbent on me to remind you of another of your father's sentiments—his utter detestation for *fortune-hunting through marriage.*

I ought also to say that your father's aversion to *inherited* money and horror of *marrying a fortune* did not extend to money itself. He had a high appreciation of the self-made man and a high sense of the value of money when rightly acquired and used, and he greatly delighted in reading the lives of men who had risen from poverty to affluence by honest industry, prudence and skill.

I hardly know why I should utter a word of warning against *marrying millions* in a rural district, where you probably see only farmers' daughters, but I feel I have done right to apprise you of your father's sentiments.

With many prayers for your health and prosperity, I am, YOUR UNKNOWN FRIEND.

P. S.—The Agents will pay you on demand £25, which you will kindly accept as a token of my continued interest in your welfare.

"The Willows," July 30, 18—.

I am to spend a week in town with Herbert "looking round," and, if there's a fair opening for an idler, will soon become a citizen of W——e. One condition I must exact in advance from any prospective employer and that is: at least two hours a day for practice on my beloved violin. I want most of my evenings for engagements and pupils, if a stranger and an inexperienced teacher can be fortunate enough to find any.

I am fully resolved also on this: my future is to be devoted sacredly to my instrument just as soon as I can gain a foothold in the profession and make enough

money to sustain myself. Until then I will accept almost any situation that is honorable, provided I can see a way through it to the end I have in view.

I am determined to earn money and lots of it, too. It seems from the letter of my "Unknown Friend" I am in debt, and although he proposes to make a donation of his claim I shall veto that straightway as soon as my income warrants it. I thank him all the same for his generous intentions.

"'The Willows," Aug. 9th, 18—.

I am engaged as assistant book-keeper and clerk in the private banking establishment of Mark Ashton & Co. on Broad and Water Streets. My salary is small but my hours, from 9 to 12 and from 1 to 4, leave me considerable time for daily practice and all my evenings to myself. Am to begin work on the 15th inst.

This is how it came about. Herbert overheard Mr. Ashton saying to the senior clerk that he was about to lose a valuable assistant, who is shortly going west with a rich uncle, and he hardly knew where to lay his hand upon a trusty and capable successor. On enquiry he found that experience was not so much a prime requisite in Mr. Ashton's mind as aptness, willingness and trustworthiness. Mr. Ashton wanted a young man with some knowledge of figures and mathematics, trusty and capable of being taught.

That evening Herb called upon the Banker at his house, and, I have no doubt, gave him such a flattering picture of myself as to ensure the promise of an interview with me for the following day. All this Herbert—sly rascal that he is—kept most religiously to himself until about an hour before the time fixed for my interview with the Banker.

"Put on your court manners, Herman," said he, "and practice your best bow. Fortune waits on your movements to-day. I am about to introduce you to the chief financial magnate in W——e with whom you have an appointment in precisely one hour from now. To-night you will make engagement as assistant book-keeper in

the Mark Ashton Banking Co. You will meet shortly the richest man in W——e, one whose wealth is enormous. Prepare yourself for this important interview."

"What on earth do you mean?" I called out in astonishment, for I had seldom been more surprised in my life.

"Precisely what I say, for once," responded Herb. Then he told me what he had done.

"But a book-keeper!" I said in some amazement. "I have had no experience. True I've taken a Commercial Course at the Academy, am a fair penman and reasonably good at figures, but as to experience——"

"You will gain all that in good time," said Herb, "and if you are apt to learn will soon know all that is required of you. Besides you are only to be assistant and Parish, his head clerk and confidential agent, will soon coach you as to your duties. He will 'break you in.'"

"But," I continued, "it is a position of great responsibility. How could Mr. Ashton accept a stranger without recommendation?"

"Recommendation!" said Herb, "why I gave him a hundred glowing eulogies of you in half an hour. I told him you had lived with us over a dozen years and never—missed a meal. That you were as regular as a chronometer—went to bed every night between 9 and 12 and always got up—some time next day. I said you were the soul of honor and would not fish in another man's trout brook without permission for the world (alluding to my late breakfasts and our fishing on another's preserve the week before) and I told him——"

But I stopped his flow of banter with a skillfully aimed shot at his head with a sofa pillow and in the physical encounter following I gave him such a shaking as to compel silence for a time.

Herb is older, stronger and slightly heavier than myself, but no match for me in skill. I can throw him, outrun him and he cannot hold his own ten minutes with me in the ring. My athletic training counts, but in a battle of words Herbs has me all to himself any day.

"Now then," I said, "tell me what really occurred between you and the Banker. What did you tell him?"

"Well, then, seriously, Herman," said he, "I did paint him a pretty picture of your character. I am an artist, in words you know, of the impressionist school, and I did put the paint on as thick as it would hold. Mr. Ashton expects to see an Adonis who will so charm every maiden lady in W——e that she will deposit her last penny with him, a young man of such incorruptible honesty that millions would be as a feather in the scale with it. I told him that you were a young man of—of—expectations yourself."

"For shame, Herb," said I, "you said nothing so silly and atrocious as that?"

"Oh, yes," added Herbert as though he suddenly recalled it, "I told the Banker that you were determined on marrying a rich girl and at the first opportunity and would like to get an introduction to his daughters, especially the heiress."

I saw it was useless to expect anything serious from him in his present mood and so got myself ready and off we started.

The Banker was not in his office, having been summoned to his drawing room in Ashton Hall, and thither we were conducted, he having left directions to that effect. As we entered the cheerful and well-appointed drawing room, two ladies, I presume his daughters, of whom I have already heard much and doubtless may hear more, arose, pleasantly excused themselves to Mr. Ashton, and swept gracefully out of the room.

The first of these was a tall and very graceful lady, a brunette with lustrous black eyes, a wealth of jet black hair which crowned a well-shaped head, and a face that seemed on first glance nearer to perfection in features and coloring than any I had ever seen before. She was exquisitely well-proportioned and her whole bearing and manner was regal, but—yes, I will record my first impression of her and say there was not a trace of the noble spirituality of my ideal woman in her being, so far as I could discover. Pride, ambition, passion, selfishness, possibly even cruelty, might exist beneath such an exterior, but the subtle something which has made Mrs. Williams a sort of standard of womanhood to me, was

lacking. The higher and diviner nature either had never been awakened, or, having been awakened, had gone to sleep. There was the exquisite poise, the complete symmetry and perfection of form and finish which we all delight in, but these are found in the marble statue. The natural warmth and atmosphere of true womanhood was not apparent.

The second daughter is a blonde, not so tall or finely formed, with a profusion of golden tresses on which the electric lights of the drawing room in shimmering sheen seemed to play as she glided from our sight. She had liquid blue eyes, a finely-proportioned and well-poised head, and while not so commanding in her bearing as the first, seemed more redolent of the light and love of true womanhood and the home.

I know I am taking great liberties in putting into words, even in this private way, my unsubstantiated impressions of these two young ladies—some would say my whims, fancies and prejudices. But I am determined to test the accuracy of my first impressions—if I am ever permitted to form their acquaintance, which is hardly probable.

I have never seen a greater contrast under one roof. Sisters? Impossible. The first I should call Night, the second, Morning; the first, Winter, with its possible storms and cold, biting tempest, the second, Spring, with its roses and smiling skies and zephyrs. The first is Juno; the second, Venus. But Venus does not answer the description perfectly. I will have to brush up my mythology and find a better term. Meantime I think the younger one bids fair to become the character Solomon described in Proverbs XXXI chapter.

But what have the daughters to do with my business engagement with the Banker? Nothing whatever. I do not even know their names.

Mark Ashton is a man of note and power, whom you are not likely to forget after once meeting. He leaves an impression on you and a deep one, too. Tall and sinewy, rather dark in complexion, with lofty forehead and well-developed in those lobes of the brain said to be the organ of the spiritual faculties. He has a clear,

calm blue eye through which shines a native dignity and calmness of soul, usually regarded as attributes of power and marks of human greatness. His countenance is very expressive. What an orator he would have made! What an actor! I never met a man with more charm of manner or power to impress his ideas upon others. Herbert introduced me and Mr. Ashton called me "Mr. Morrison," but promptly apologized when he was corrected.

The incident struck me as singular, as it was the only slip or halt in his speech for the hour.

"Kindly tell a very busy man something which I should probably know, about yourself, Mr. Molson," said the Banker.

I gave him the main facts of my short and uneventful life, asking if he was prepared to trust one so completely a stranger.

He smiled—he has a winning smile—and said no one was a stranger to him who had been introduced and commended by the Williams' family.

Then he lifted me into the seventh heaven of delight by a eulogy of Mrs. Williams, her gifts and graces and her model household, all done into sentences so perfect and delivered with such charm and effect, that I felt drawn to him with ties of sympathetic friendship before I had known him ten minutes.

If Mr. Ashton had known me personally all my life and read the secrets of my heart, he could not have taken a more effective method of winning my good will than he did by touching those chords of gratitude and love which bound me to the dear ones at "The Willows."

He next asked me my age, my plans in life, and if I designed to take up banking as a profession.

When I told him I was to be a musician, he answered:

"A noble calling, doubtless, but a poor money-maker. I hope you intend to make money. It is a great power, and a young man of talent and courage and vim ought in these wonderful days to make lots of wealth."

At the mention of money his countenance seemed to change, and assumed a look of intense greediness and avarice. He sat looking for a moment into space, rubbing his hands in a sort of avaricious glee, and repeating

over and over the words in a monotone, "lots of money! lots of money!"

Then apparently waking up, he excused his absent-mindedness and resumed the conversation.

"Well, then, the only question, Mr. Molson, is one of remuneration. If that is satisfactory, let us consider the engagement settled."

And so in a short time the contract was concluded, and we drifted to other topics. Mr. Ashton has rare powers of entertainment and he and Herbert get on capitally together. The interview was one of rich pleasure on my part, through the kindness and grace of the Banker, and but for the one untoward incident I should have been charmed with Mark Ashton.

Of course, I allude to the revelation he gave us, unconsciously of course, of the intense love of money and spirit of avarice that is said to be his ruling passion.

This was the one jarring note in the otherwise harmonious interview between a man of princely wealth and the young man starting out to make a career for himself. Well for Mark Ashton if he is wealthy and the master of his money. But, if my father's instructions are true, alas! for Mark Ashton, if, as I fear, the money is master of the man.

On the whole, my impression of the Banker is much more favorable than public report has led me to expect. I am told that he is regarded with aversion by the multitude, even with hatred and scorn by many, possibly through envy of his great possessions. Great wealth always excites the envy of narrow minds. But those who speak evil of the Banker justify themselves by pointing out his greed for gold, his lack of a sense of justice as evidenced in the treatment of his daughters, his utter lack of mercy in dealing with competitors in business, and the passion which urges him on and on in amassing wealth by questionable methods, ignoring meantime the claims of charity about him. Those who know him best, or profess to, report that two passions rule him—the miser's love of amassing and hoarding and an insatiable ambition to connect his family by marriage and wealth with some of the European aristocracy.

What foundation, if any, there is for these charges I shall possibly know better in a few months. They tell very queer stories about him in W———e and about his conduct.

My first impression is favorable—with a full and painful recognition of the master passion of the man which flashed out so clearly in our first interview. I am puzzled, however, by the man's peculiarities of action. I noted one, the rubbing of his hands. It occurred when he was talking of great wealth and amassing money. Evidently the thought pleased him. The other is the sudden irradiation of his face as from some internal source of light or inspiration. I had heard of it, and to-night saw a glimmer of it. It occurred when he was asking me about my future life-work and had told me what a poor business music was with which to earn a fortune, and hinted to me I had better change it for banking. Herbert spoke up and said that the Rothschilds had not enough gold in their coffers to tempt Herman to give up his violin. As I turned my gaze toward him I saw this peculiar light upon his face. Had I been a friend of his or even a former acquaintance, I might have interpreted it as some expression of interest in me personally or approbation of my devotion to music, but as a perfect stranger I could only refer it to some passing thought which crossed the surface of his mind without finding expression in speech, possibly some view of possible gain or triumph over a competitor or other similar notion.

One little incident may show the character of the man unless, indeed, it was used by him to test his visitors. I had made a statement that artists and musicians could not hope to become rich.

"I hope you expect to be very rich, some day, Mr. Molson. Great riches make a man very powerful, very powerful," said he, rubbing his hands in a sort of gleeful rapidity.

I shall some day learn the key to unlock Mark Ashton's character—even if I cannot unlock the mystery of my own life.

Aug. 15th, 18—.

I have put in my first day at the bank. Mr. Ashton received me courteously, even kindly, and handed me over to Mr. Parish, who is the real manager as well as chief bookkeeper and agent.

Duties so far seem very light, mostly routine, probably because there is little else that they can yet commit to my hands. In a month, Mr. Parish says, I shall understand my work thoroughly. He is courteous and, I think, means to be kind, *but I don't like him.* I don't even ask myself why, for I have learned there are many things about our likes and dislikes we can't put into argument and support by reason. He is a man about forty years of age, heavy set, muscular, swarthy countenance, a foreign air, black hair, a restless eye, medium height and polished in manner and speech. His polished manner and speech, however, lack the soulfulness and warmth we find in Mark Ashton.

He has the reputation of being devoted especially to two things, religion and scientific study. He is a member of one of the prominent churches, converted through Mr. Moody's evangelism. He spends his evenings, it is said, in scientific study and reading. Some say, however, that he is writing a book, others that he is at work upon an invention, the one accepted fact being that he has his evenings mostly to himself and allows few interruptions. He is regarded as a confirmed bachelor and gives the ladies "a wide berth," as the saying goes.

Sept. 1st, 18—.

I have a class of ten private pupils whom I teach in my evening hours and am leader of the new Symphony Orchestra. I am also progressing with my office work, so Lewis Parish tells me. Mr. Ashton has inspected my work twice, made a few suggestions, is greatly interested in handwriting as an index of character, and has devoted some time to my writing. Mr. Parish says he commended my "neatness and care" in making entries and my bold plain writing. He is something of a faddist,

evidently, for he says character is as truly revealed in one's handwriting as in his speech. I have not yet learned positively what it implies when he rubs one hand over the other—one of his mannerisms. I believe it is pleasure; he did it to-day when inspecting my work.

He attracts, yet constantly puzzles me. There seems to be in him attributes and qualities which I should think could not co-exist in any character. How can a man possess at one and the same time the ripened judgment and experience which he undoubtedly has, and be the secret slave of an unreasoning and consuming passion for gold? I cannot reconcile his evil reputation in this city as a miser and a man devoid of conscience and principle in business, and the look of pure, unadulterated avarice I saw on his face during our first interview, with sentiments I have heard from his lips and with what I feel concerning the man when I am near him. Ah, well, I will wait and see.

Sept. 8th, 18—.

I have been introduced to Mark Ashton's daughters. I was right in my first impression—they are not sisters. I learned this fact, however, through Herbert some time before I met them for the second time.

The younger and smaller one, she with the golden hair, is his only daughter, and eighteen years of age. Her name is Lucille.

The elder sister is an only daughter of a cousin of Mark Ashton, Leon St. Clair, and was legally adopted by the Banker about the time of his wife's death in New York. It was also after the tragic death of Mr. St. Clair in New Orleans.

According to report, this cousin of the Banker, who at one time had rendered a great service of personal friendship to him, having lost his wife, was stopping with his only child, Helena, then a girl of three, in the Pacific Hotel at New Orleans. A fire broke out and after the alarm and excitement was pretty well over, all the inmates, as it was supposed, having been rescued, and the people were watching the building being devoured by

the greedy flames, a heart-rending cry was heard. A mother, residing with her child on the same flat as Mr. St. Clair had just returned from the opera to discover that her child was probably still in her room. Mr. St. Clair seized a sheet from the pile of bedding lying at the entrance, eluded the police, dashed into the burning building, found his way along the familiar corridor to the child's room, seized her while sleeping and wrapping the sheet around her head, reached the doorway of the burning building with the child safe, but only to fall exhausted into the arms of a fireman. He had breathed the flame himself in saving the life of the child, and died before the morning light.

Helena was then alone in the world, and Mark Ashton, hearing of the heroic act from the lips of the mother whose child had been rescued, was so affected by the story that he missed two whole days from business, and soon after journeyed to New Orleans, erected a costly monument to Mr. St. Clair and legally adopted the daughter as his own. The papers at the time rang the praises of St. Clair's bravery and Mr. Ashton was also much praised for the grateful recognition he made to the hero's daughter. I got these facts from Lewis Parish.

Reverting again to the popular aversion to Mark Ashton—on the part of some we might call it hatred—may it not be traced in part to this singular fact that the adopted girl has seemingly usurped the place his own daughter should occupy. It seems to be on all hands understood and accepted that Miss Helena is the heiress and the bulk of all the vast properties owned by him is to go to her. She is recognized as mistress of Ashton Hall, as she is recognized as the social leader of her own somewhat exclusive set, has unstinted money at her command, and the younger sister and real daughter of the Banker occupies a secondary and inferior position not only in the home, but in society as well. This fact seems so unnatural and unjust that the public, in resentment, condemns and denounces the one responsible for it.

From words that fall occasionally from the Banker's lips in his strangely communicative moods to his few chosen friends, it appears to be his idea to build up a

colossal fortune, found an estate and hand it down, through the marriage of the heiress with some representative of the aristocracy of the old world, to succeeding generations. Not that, so far as I can learn, there is any lack of affection for his own child. Indeed, if reports be true, he idolizes Miss Lucille as he did her mother. And she is his inseparable companion, his consolation, his confidential adviser, and what seems even stranger still, is thoroughly at one with the Banker in all his efforts to promote Miss Helena's glory and increase her success as a social leader.

Doubtless another cause of the estrangement between the public and Mark Ashton is found in the fact that the adopted daughter on whom he is lavishing wealth and honors and to whom he proposes to give his wealth, is not popular with the public, while Miss Lucille is extremely so. Miss Helena is cold and haughty in manner, and would never be considered approachable except through the formal rules and regulations of fashionable society. Miss Lucille is simple, affectionate, informal and so altogether human and lovable in her qualities that she is a general favorite, not only in the social circle, but also in everyday life. Nine out of every ten who know the young ladies inwardly curse the Banker for his announced intention of making Miss Helena the heiress. And all Miss Ashton's beauty cannot overcome this feeling. But then, after all, perhaps if they knew her better they might like her more.

Miss Ashton assumes the air and manner of a princess and spends the Banker's money lavishly on costly dresses, entertainments and travel. Miss Lucille lives simply, dresses with simplicity, spends little money, and seems contented and happy. In fact, this is the strangest thing about the inmates of Ashton Hall—that while each one there seems to act in a way which we might suppose would give offense to the others and which seems quite unnatural to outsiders, they all seem in love with one another and perfectly content.

Another thing which has contributed to the unpopularity of the Banker is his well-known niggardliness in supporting the churches and the popular charities of the

city. The man who from his wealth should be a leader in benevolences of this nature is either represented by some trifling sum in the subscription list to popular charities or his name is conspicuous by its absence.

But I started in to tell about my introduction to the Banker's daughters and how it came about. I see I must shorten up my entries or soon buy a new book.

One evening at four p. m. Mr. Ashton sent word he wished to see me in his library. The library is just across the hallway from his private office, the bank and Ashton Hall being connected buildings.

I waited on him at once and was motioned to a chair. He expressed his pleasure that I was likely to render, after a little, effective service and hoped we should get on well together, and asked me if I liked my work.

"Yes and no," I replied. "I like it as well as I can expect to like any purely business engagement. The duties are not at all burdensome, and I am kindly treated by all concerned, but music is my chosen profession and my delight and some day I shall give myself unreservedly to it."

"Be advised by one much older, and who should be wiser," said he, "and give it up."

"I shall never give up my calling." I added proudly. "The world needs music as much as it needs commerce. It is what nature intended me for—what I can do best —and I am as truly called to add to the world's harmony as others are to add to the world's wealth, or as the minister is to preach his gospel. No, I shall follow music for life."

"And live and die in poverty!" added Mr. Ashton, rubbing his hands over each other vigorously. "Why there's no chance of a man becoming rich, much less amassing a princely fortune in music. It is a poor starveling kind of business. Why—with one good stroke in stocks I'll make more money than you would gather in a life-time!"

He said it so proudly, so insolently and with such a sense of superiority, that it exasperated me and I said somewhat hotly:—

"Yes, perhaps so. But what you have gained by your lucky stroke, another person has lost. Gambling does not enrich the world. And, after all, money is not the only thing in the world, nor is it the chief thing, in my estimation."

He got up and strode across the floor two or three times, his face turned from me, and I could not tell whether I had pleased or angered him. I had certainly interested him. When he had seated himself again I noted that his face had no token of resentment for my bold speech, it was even beautiful.

"Ah, well," he said at last, " a wilful man must have his way. I'll not say more at present. Perhaps experience will bring you change of view and wisdom."

After a little he resumed: "Mr. Molson, I have reposed much confidence in you in taking you into my bank and I am about to repose still greater confidence in you in inviting you to my house. I do not introduce many into the circle of our family acquaintance and only those I fully trust."

"You flatter me very much, Mr. Ashton," I replied, "and I hope I may deserve your confidence."

"The fact is," said he, "an exigency has arisen in regard to one number on the program for my daughter's musicale this evening. The artist is ill, and Miss Ashton highly prides herself on the select character not only of her guests, but also of her program. I am deputized, therefore, to see if I can make terms with you to fill the missing numbers. We discussed a number of other names to supply the vacancy, but you know, Mr. Molson, there are artists who play creditably, who would presume on such an invitation and—but I will let the young ladies plead their own cause," and tapping the bell he summoned the daughters into the library.

Both young ladies were equally charming, radiant in their beauty, presenting, of course, contrasting types.

After the introduction Miss Ashton went direct to the point and asked me if I would consent on such short notice to supply the missing numbers, and I assented to her request with what grace I could command,

so the only point to settle was the selection. I gave her the choice of several selections: the E Major Concerto by Bach; The Carnival of Venice; Otello Fantaisie; The Gypsy Dance; an Aria of Beethoven; Melodies,, Chants du Voyageur, I. Paderewski; May Song by Vogt. But she had learned I was a composer and wished one of my own compositions. It was in vain that I insisted on the unseemliness of my appearing first in a composition of my own and pointed out the simple unpretentious character of the two violin compositions I had been bold enough to give to the world. She was resolute, and I equally so, until Miss Lucille suggested the "Carnival of Venice" and the May Song as the numbers to be announced with the understanding that I would play a composition of my own as an encore.

To this I laughingly assented, "provided an encore is demanded."

I took my leave at once. Mr. Ashton accompanied me to the door and said, "I am delighted that I shall be able to hear you in my own home. The program is now complete and I thank you most sincerely for responding to our request on such short notice."

My first impression of the young ladies is confirmed by what I saw of them in my introduction. Miss Ashton's is the most perfect face I have ever seen, but there is a something lacking about her that is present with Miss Lucille. She represents and emphasizes the exterior beauty of attire, face, form and manner; Miss Lucille has the warmth and glow of the inner life and beauty as well. She radiates it and satisfies one's longing for perfect balance of attractions between the physical and the spiritual.

There breathes about Miss Lucille the air of June with suggestions of budding life and fragrance and flowers. There is a sensible chill to the emotions in Miss Ashton's presence as though November air and cold were at hand, or as though you stood beside a marble statue rather than a living being.

I could not but speculate what possibilities of ideal womanhood were before Miss Helena if, added to her divine beauty, there should ever come to her the living

soul of true womanhood. I noted these differences between the young ladies in the Library when they each in turn thanked me very prettily for coming to their rescue so opportunely. Each used very simple and expressive words, each charmed me with her manner, but Lucille's thanks were seconded by her beaming eyes and warmed by the genial atmosphere of her being, while Helena's thanks were, with all her prettiness, the thanks of polite society and of the shop.

I filled my professional engagement—for such (alas, for human hopes!) it proved to be—at the Ashton Hall last evening and on this wise. I was very kindly received by Miss Lucille and afterwards by Miss Ashton, who introduced me to my fellow musicians but to no one else.

I came on the third number of part II and gave the "Carnival" as we had arranged. I spent a few uncomfortable moments of inward agitation before my number was reached but lost all fear, as I always do, when once my hand has drawn the bow. I think I never played it better, possibly never quite so well, and received a very fine and appreciative hearing and at the close, in response to hearty applause, gave the old favorite "Home, Sweet Home" with my own variations and then had to bow my thanks in response to several recalls. The May Song won equal appreciation.

Miss Ashton seemed to be delighted and at the close of the musicale, thanked me for my "artistic work," pronounced me a "true artist" and said other gratifying things. Miss Lucille simply said a plain old fashioned "Thank, you, Mr. Molson" but supported this with a beaming look of gratitude.

As I was not introduced to the guests I took my leave at the close of the concert and on doing so Miss Ashton said in undertone, "Papa Ashton will send you your fee."

"Fee!" I said in indignant surprise. "Assuredly," said she, "you did not think we could accept your services in any other way."

The whole evening which had been one of delight—

save the incident noted above—was now completely spoiled for me. I wished I had not entered Ashton Hall. So, Papa Ashton had sought to warn me before the musicale and Miss Ashton had plainly told me after it, that I was a hired performer—did not belong to their set—and to be paid for my services just as the man who tuned the piano or the one who furnished refreshments! The whole teaching of the affair as far as I was concerned was this: "You belong to the class who serve; we'll pay you for the service; but do not presume you are our equals."

I am richer by a generous check which came next day and in my experience of the world, but I feel like one who is mountain climbing and has received a bad fall, is sorely bruised and full of suffering. I know better what to expect hereafter at Ashton Hall.

But what right have I to complain? How could a penniless youth be the equal to a millionaire? It is an age of mammon and mammon worship!

My solos at Miss Ashton's musicale have caught the ear of the music-loving citizens of W——e. The papers were very appreciative in their notices and I have already had four ivitations to similar gatherings to be held within the next few weeks. I am likely to have a larger class and much concert work this fall and winter. Some very kind people seem a little disposed to lionize the new teacher of violin. Such extremists do their friends more harm than good and I am determined not to lose my head because a few good people are too enthusiastic.

My surprise and indignation at the payment for my services seems to have been talked over by the Ashton household. It could scarcely have escaped Miss Ashton's attention, I think. I heard from all of them a few apologetic words in the morning. Miss Lucille sent a note to say she regretted I had suffered over the incident and Miss Ashton herself called at my desk and briefly, but prettily told me how many of her friends had been enquiring about me and how warm their commendation of my good work and said in going, "Of course you know I did not intend to hurt your feelings by mentioning a fee" and with a smile bowed herself out.

Sept. 11th, 18—.

I have had some experiences of late that reveal some darker shades in Mark Ashton's character.

Last evening Mr. Parish and myself were summoned to his private office to meet the Banker in conference. Mr. Ashton opened the conference promptly at the hour appointed by a little address which I am able to summarize—thanks to a good verbal memory—about as follows:—

"As I explained to you, Mr. Parish, in my last interview, and Mr. Molson may as well become acquainted with our policy and purposes since we will need his aid, I wish to turn certain securities into cash and make all collections I can so as to have, for possible contingencies, at least half a million in ready money available within the next few weeks, or at the latest, say before the end of the year. It is quite a tidy little sum and will require some labor but with your hearty co-operation, gentlement, it can be done and even overdone before the end of the year.

"Now on Tuesday next, Mr. Parish, you will go to New York and meet in the same hotel, in the same room, and at the same hour as in your former trips three of my friends from the West and two from New York, all equally interested in our series "A" Railroad stock, and hear what plans they have for "bulling" the market and then unloading this stock as speedily as possible. I have written instructions which are sealed at present and which you may open after hearing their proposals. I leave you absolute power of decision. I want to close out that stock summarily and, of course, to realize the highest price possible.

"From the general outline which Thompson gave me in his last advice, I believe that with a strong pull and a long pull and a pull all together' you can bring the matter through successfully. You yourself are personally interested in this stock and you thought me liberal after the success of your last trip. See that our interests do not suffer and you will have no cause for regret. You have your code and can reach me privately any hour, but rely on yourself. Tell them in council not to stick at

trifles, not to be over-scrupulous and to remember that the Bible warns us against being too religious!

"Now, and this more particularly concerns you, Mr. Molson, we shall have to foreclose on about twelve or fifteen farms and nearly as many city properties. I learn you are going to spend next Sunday with the Williams' family, which just suits my purpose. Fine old family, healthy, happy and sound as a nut morally, noble principles there, sir, as you know of course. I shall trouble you to take my written instructions out to Mr. Williams. I don't think I told you Mr. Williams has been my personal friend for years and my agent with the farmers.

"I have given him full instructions as to the foreclosures there. He won't like to do it—he's as tender-hearted as a child—no courage whatever when it comes to grasping his own. If he thinks another needs what he has a claim to, he will actually go without his due. Very fine as moral sentiment; very poor as business. Now, Mr. Molson, you must stiffen up his courage a little in this work and just say to honest John Eben that in this forclosure campaign 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' I always quote him that scripture when I want him to put the screws on. Tell him to give them until Oct. 15th and if he sees fit, to extend it to Nov. 1st, but not an hour after," and Mr. Ashton's hand came down upon the table with a ringing blow and that hard look of wicked avarice came over his face which made it seem almost demoniacal!

"Now I am going to hand over the city mortgages which are overdue to Baggs and Baker. They will rush them through in short order and without any sickly sentiment about it. There's one, however, that fortunately is right in your end of the town, the Perkins mortgage which has been running at loose end altogether too long, and I thought you would consent to a little extra labor, seeing the plight we are in, and call over some evening this week and say to Mrs. Perkins that that $500 must be paid forthwith—say in two weeks or out they go. She's been dawdling along a few dollars a month for years, and while I would like to help her, and have done so in

the past, I cannot and will not support the town. I must have my money now, you will give her my message straight."

Then turning to Parish, while that horrid look of the miser overspread his face, he said with a smile of exultation, "What do you think our average rate of interest from the loans to farmers was last year? You know we do not loan to them direct but Baggs and Baker use our money and give us half. Why it as an even 30 per cent. We are silent partners, you know. But I forgot, Mr. Molson, of course, does not understand this."

And turning to me particularly he went on, "You see successful business, sir, is not based on the golden rule. We reap our harvest from the straits and necessities of the farmers in the spring time. There is, of course, some popular prejudice against money lenders who charge and get a high rate of interest from the farmers in spring. But we avoid that easily by making Baggs & Baker our agents, and they know how to get the last cent in a man's pocket book. If we did openly what they did—charge the farmers from two to five per cent a month for money for seed grain—it would injure us with our city trade, so deep are human prejudices. The so-called respectable classes, some of the upper tendom, would be shocked. Mrs. Grundy would talk and we should suffer, if they knew we were mixed up with any shark methods of fleecing the farmers.

"But there are men specially fitted for this work, faces of steel, hearts of flint, no consciences but a rubber cord instead that will stretch around anything, and they are only too glad to have us as silent partners, furnish the cash and divide with us the profits. Why, old Hewitt got five per cent. a month regularly, interest sometimes in advance. He knows how to bait and angle for the highest interest as truly as the trout catcher does for his wily nibbler.

"Here is his method," continued Mr. Ashton, leaning back in his chair and seemingly talking to some unseen auditors, while he rubbed his hands rapidly over one another, and looked the living embodiment of covete-

ousness and avarice: "A farmer comes around to Hewitt in spring in great need of money. He wants it to secure provender for his stock, bread or clothing for his family and especially for seed grain (this is our harvest time with the farmers.) Mr. Hewitt is very sorry—at least he says he is—he has just loaned the last hundred dollars. Can the farmer call again? The next week the farmer is there in sorer straits than ever. Hewitt hasn't a dollar. But stay! Perhaps he can borrow it. If so, it will be from some imaginary miser who will not loan it for less than from 3 to 5 per cent a month. They all have the same method. They get their own terms practically, and we, silent partners, have to be content with half. It is money against skill. An equal partnership, a fair deal, and the money rolls in pretty fast, gentlemen, pretty fast, I tell you."

I looked at him in the blankest amazement and dread. Such a revelation of unblushing cupidity, such brazen confession of his own inhumanity, such satanic glee over money coined sometimes out of the needs and anguish of human hearts, made me cower before him as before a moral monstrosity!

Stunned as by a blow, I could feel the growing pallor of my cheeks, as I reeled rather than walked from that diabolical conference.

Of one thing I am sure. If I had not given my assent to the mission to Mrs. Perkins before I had heard the story of dealings with the farmers, I would never have undertaken it. Now my soul revolted at the task.

And what astonished me as much as the revelations of Mark Ashton's inhumanity was the fact that Parish sat there, an interested, and for aught I could see, a sympathetic listener, and doubtless a partner in these nefarious doings.

And what shall I say of John Eben Williams? I will never believe him a willing partner in any deception, or in any sense an accomplice either in the work of extortions from the farmers or in treating inhumanely any of his fellows. I would stake my life upon his honor and goodness.

Alas! life's revelations are coming thick and fast

upon me. I am afraid I shall one day, and soon, cast aside the rosy optimism with which Mrs. Williams taught me to view humanity!

Sept. 18th, 18—.

I called on Mrs. Perkins who is a widow with three beautiful children, and far from strong in health. I never had a more unwelcome task. I am sure now if Mark Ashton approached me with a similar request what answer I would give him. Even before I called upon Mrs. Perkins I had begun to loathe Mark Ashton, the miser, and ever since the conference with the widow that night, my horror of the man's principles has increased. It was only his adroitness and wordy skill at the beginning of that conference with Parish and myself, and perhaps his little affabilities to me before that night, which induced me to assent to undertake what makes me in a sense his accomplice in a very inhuman act. But I must put it down as it occurred. I did what I had been ordered to, faithfully and without circumlocution, and I saw the delicate little mother tremble beneath the threats I uttered in Mark Ashton's name. She bore up bravely and began to tell me about herself and her husband.

"You see, sir," she began, with little occasional catches in her breath, "I have not been very strong since my husband's death six years ago and I suppose I should have given up this place, this dear little cottage home. But it had grown so precious to us all, and made doubly dear to me because my husband took such interest in the place. He built the fence and made the flower beds and when he passed away it seemed as though every spot in the yard and grounds and cottage was full of sweet memories of Arthur.

"I know had he lived he never would have parted with our little home. And then, all our children were born here and it was here Arthur sickened and died. We moved his cot over against the window there so he might see the flowers in the morning and there one morning in June he breathed his last." She paused

and I hardly dared to trust myself to look upon her face, yet did and saw the gathering storm—not of anger but of sorrow—in her eyes and soon with its flood of tears it swept over her. Her self-restraint was gone and the storm caught her up in its fury, in its wild gusts of grief and shook her with its fierce passion as the tornado shakes the helpless child caught in its great arms. Her sobs of grief pierced my soul. I felt myself a sinner justly condemned and punished for the cruel message I had delivered.

It was to me unspeakably sad to witness the grief of that delicate little mother, helpless as she was, sitting with her three children looking up with wonder into her face. I never could look upon suffering unmoved and this scene moved me profoundly.

She soon rallied herself, however, wiped away all traces of her agitation, and yet with an occasional sob in her voice begged my pardon for her lack of self-control and for intruding her grief upon a stranger, and said she did not blame Mr. Ashton. He had a right to his money and she would give up the place peaceably at the time appointed. "But," she continued, "why you, yourself, are suffering, sir. I thank your for your sympathy. I knew when you were telling me that I must leave that your heart was not in the message. I do not in any way blame you, nor any one, sir, but I am thankful for your kind heart."

"God bless you," I said, "for that," and I left in a strange agitation of soul.

Next morning I schooled myself into composure, went to the library and told him the story. I think I grew eloquent over the brave-hearted little defender of her home, struggling with sickness and poverty to preserve the little cottage, sanctified by the mutual toil of husband and wife and enshrined in her heart as the birth-place of her children and the place where her husband breathed his last.

"And now," I said, "Mr. Ashton you are a man of great wealth, you will not have the heart to take away Mrs. Perkins' little home from her."

"Very noble sentiments—very beautiful sentiments!

They do you great credit from the moral point of view" said Mr. Ashton. "But they are utterly irreconcilable with correct and successful business procedure—I shall have to have the house or the money" he said sternly. "She has had years in which to pay up since I bought the mortgage, and I don't know how long before, plenty of time. I am not bound to furnish houses for all the widows, if I have wealth. No, no, Mr. Molson, the sentiment is beautiful and I can admire it with you and, as a bit of stereotyped morality, mercy is a beautiful and noble thing. 'Virtue is its own reward,' 'Pity the unfortunate,' 'The quality of mercy is not strained' etc., etc. All this copy-book morality I am familiar with from my youth up. There is not sixpence in it all. You are a young man, Mr. Molson, and have yet to get acquainted with business rules and usages. It is unfortunate that you are ignorant of correct business maxims. It is quite pardonable, however. But, my dear Mr. Molson, don't you see that a man would never grow to be a rich man, much less amass a colossal fortune, who allowed his sentiments to run away with his pocketbook. A cool head that knows how to repress and smother out these disturbing feelings is absolutely necessary to the business man. I am, I say it humbly, advancing in my knowledge and practice of the true principles of business success. Why, twenty years ago, it would have been just like me to give that woman more time, perhaps to cancel her interest and make her a donation. But not now, no sir, she must pay up or move."

"It is inhuman in you, merciless and cruel," I said hotly, "I would rather beg my bread than get millions by your correct business principles and utter disregard of the poor and unfortunate."

"Precisely what I used to think and say," he remarked cooly.

"You see," he went on "a man to be a great success financially must have an iron will——."

"An iron heart, too," I said bitterly.

"Precisely," said Mr. Ashton, "you could not have presented my views better than in those very words. An iron heart that is what a man needs who wants to run

his bank account into the millions," and he rubbed his hands joyously I thought, as the demon avarice transfigured his dark features.

"Mr. Ashton," I cried, "your business is your own. I have no right to give advice, much less to dictate. But understand that on the day you dispossess Mrs. Perkins of her little home, I leave your service. You can, of course, do well without me. I am not at all necessary to the great Banker—but I will serve under no man, however rich or great, who can do so dastardly a deed as that!"

He sprang to his feet as though an electric shock had passed through him, his face irradiated, then paced the floor a moment and stood at his full height towering above me, looking at me, his soul shining out of his great eyes and it was many seconds before he spoke. I was puzzled again by this strange man, for though I now knew that it was anger at my bold words that had sent the glow over his face, it was an anger that did not distort but rather glorified his face, for his countenance changed under it from the picture of greed and miserliness to one of open and manly benevolence. I was nonplussed, bewildered and utterly at a loss to account for his strange words and stranger looks.

When he spoke again it was with a subdued calmness and even gentleness of manner.

"Why, Mr. Molson, do you mean me to understand that for a foolish bit of sentiment like that which you have expressed you could give up your present position, your prospective advancement, and sacrifice all that our bank and our influence could do for you. Well! Well! Well!

"We are two stubborn ones, well met. I am going to have that house or the money by the time stated. I don't blame you—young men are ardent. You are young and inexperienced. I even admire your courage but you are very unbusinesslike in your views. I shall be sorry to lose you, but if I must, I must. I presume things will run on the same as usual until I take possession of the Perkins' house."

"Most certainly," I said and so ended by interview with the Banker.

Oct. 4th, 18—.

Things have gone on smoothly the past week or two. The Banker treats me with studious politeness and shows no signs—whatever he may feel—of resentment over my plain speech.

I have been looking on the quiet for another situation and, if my class were only larger, I would devote myself fully to my music. It is a pity I have to follow business at all—my heart is not in it.

I fully expected after my hot interview with the Banker concerning Mrs. Perkins' case, to have been away from Mark Ashton's bank ere this and would have been but for the occurrence of a strange event just two nights ago.

It seems that Mrs. Perkins' sad case became widely known through W——e and stirred up considerable healthy indignation against the Banker. This did not, however, seem to deter him in the least as I heard him announcing to Parish just the night before the two weeks notice expired, that he would have possession of the place next day or have the cash. I really do not know how the report of the case got published as I gave no one the story and Mrs. Perkins, modest little body as she is, made no complaint in my presence against Mark Ashton and even seemed to feel she had wronged him in not paying up the mortgage. I feel sure she never made the matter public. Probably her friends learned she was going to move and drew their conclusions from it. It seems she has many kind friends and admirers for one in humble life. The facts of the case seemed to have reached some charitable heart, for relief came to her in a most unexpected, even in a mysterious way.

She had been for several days busily packing and on the night before her intended removal, having finished her work, sat down early in the evening with her youngest child upon her knee, and her two other children playing at her feet, to spend as happily as she could the last

evening in her dear little cottage home. There was a great pain at her heart but she was trying to make her children as happy as possible the last night she was to abide in that place so sacred to her, the dearest spot on all the earth. It was a cloudy night and a drizzling rain was falling and nothing was further from her thoughts than that she should have a visitor much less that a stranger should call upon her on such a night.

There came a hasty rap at the door and, opening it, a lady, closely veiled, asked permission to speak to her a moment. On entering and being shown a seat she said:

"I have reasons of my own for not wishing you to know who I am. Suffice it to say, I am a friend. Some day, perhaps, I may tell you who I am, but not now. I have come on a friendly mission and I want you, in return for my friendship, to make no efforts to find out my name. You need not leave your home. I have brought you sufficient money to pay your debt and the balance you are to put in the bank for future need. Be of good cheer," and laying a roll of bills on the table she put her arms around the speechless woman, lifted her veil just a little and kissed her, kissed each of the children and with a fervent "God bless you" was gone.

The bills were of various banks and denominations and it was found impossible to get any clue from the money to the unknown benefactor.

Next day Mrs. Perkins paid off her debt to Mark Ashton and wrote a brief but very expressive note of thanks to her unknown benefactor which appeared in all our daily papers.

Oct. 5th, 18—.

Everybody is on the alert to find out, if possible, who is the donor of that $1000—for that was the full amount given—to Mrs. Perkins. Some have proposed to set the police on the trail to solve, if possible, the mystery. Mrs. Perkins promptly prohibited this by saying: "It would be a poor return for the lady's generosity to force her to disclose her identity. No, anxious as I am to know, and see her face to face and give her my blessing, I

will make no efforts to find her out and I wish no efforts made in my behalf. When she is disposed, if ever, to reveal her identity, I will then be doubly her debtor."

And so the matter rests as far as active investigation is concerned, but rumor has already credited the benefaction to a dozen or more charitable ladies, most of whom have already disclaimed it.

Mark Ashton has never alluded to the subject in my presence, but I am glad he knows what I think of his inhuman greed.

Oct. 6th, 18—.

I am treated with studied respect at the bank. We have had no more conferences. Perhaps the Banker is ashamed of his barbarity. I trust so.

Last evening, as I was leaving the bank, after one or two casual remarks, Mr. Ashton said:

"I have been charged by my daughters to see you and invite you to spend an evening with us and a few friends next week. The affair is altogether informal—just a lady and gentleman besides ourselves, and they are to have an evening with Mendelssohn. I think we all want to remove the unfavorable impression you must have received of us on the night of the musicale.

"Will you come—and be sure and bring your violin along? Oh, yes, what a poor memory I am getting! You are to bring Mr. Williams with you, if he can come."

I thanked him and assented, providing Mr. Williams was free from engagement.

Then it is clear the Banker has forgiven me. I hope there will be no cheque offered this time.

Oct. 11th, 18—.

I must confess to one of the most delightful evenings of my life at Ashton Hall last night. Youth, beauty, music, flowers, wit and humor, genius, cordial welcome —and all this in a home of wealth and with people of refinement.

Mark Ashton is a prince among entertainers—a totally different man in the drawing room from the Mark

Ashton in the office. I looked at him last evening, with his face beaming with good nature, his eye sparkling with merriment, his whole being radiating kindness and sympathy and happiness and I asked myself, is it possible that is the man I saw a few nights since with the sordid look of a miser, gleefully chuckling over the robbery of poor farmers and the turning out of a widow and helpless children into the street?

As host he has in stock a fund of geniality, courtesy, good humor, sparkling anecdote and epigram, and makes his guests so thoroughly at home, one can only wonder who is the real man—the one you see thus in his home or the unmerciful Mark Ashton of the office, or the miser Mark Ashton of his public reputation.

And the young ladies—each charming in her own way—were very kind and seemed anxious that each of the guests should have a full evening of enjoyment.

For the first time I heard Miss Ashton play, and all that has been said of her as a brilliant performer on the piano is true and much might be added. There is—what I did not expect to find—a soul in her music. She loses herself in its movement. The iciness and chill you feel in her presence as a social leader, are lost in the Helena Ashton at the piano with Mendelssohn before her. She enters with a will into the theme of the music and seems swallowed up in the depths and currents of the more passionate parts, so that for a time her normal personality seems lost and only reappears as the music ceases. Her face is a study during her performance at the piano. You see as on a screen in moving pictures the poetry and passion of the music portrayed.

She is not a great musician, has many faults of technique, and in some passages lacks that power of true interpretation which belongs always to the great artists, but I have never heard a pianist who was more at one with her music as far as she has grasped its subtle meaning, or one in whom music was more thoroughly incarnated for the time being than Miss Ashton. She has great possibilities before her as a musician—especially if some of life's deeper experiences awaken the diviner sympathies and qualities of her spiritual nature.

As I have said, Miss Ashton is, while playing her favorite compositions, surrounded by a warmer atmosphere of human feeling and sympathy than in the social circle; yet there is still, to an observer, a sense of deficiency, a somewhat painful impression of something lacking, despite all her charms and brilliancy—a something about her, something within her, still wanting, or at least dormant and waiting the new life of the springtime yet to come.

I never fail when seeing her to think of the beautiful marble form, cold and lifeless, and to wonder if her higher soul will waken some day into life.

Miss Lucille has a soft and flexible voice which you hear with unmingled pleasure. She attempts as yet nothing as difficult as Miss Ashton, but her work, while not winning so much admiration with the hearer, leaves a more permanent sense of satisfaction and pleasure. I caught myself several times while she was singing thinking of dear Mrs. Williams and my good-time friends there—just as in Mrs. Williams' presence I have often felt an inner sense as of loving friends from bygone years about me. It is a peculiar experience and I mean to study it and, if possible, find its interpretation.

I have almost left Herbert out of consideration, yet he was a most important factor in the evening's enjoyment. He sings a delightful solo and he sang last night to very appreciative hearers. Many a peal of laughter greeted his wit, and in fact he monopolized the favors of the evening—I suppose I never will shine as a conversationalist—until the music engaged our attention.

We did not confine ourselves to Mendelssohn, for Miss Ashton and I played Mozart's Sonata in B flat minor for piano and violin. I played only one solo of any importance.

The wild rhythm of the "Gipsy Dance" seemed to please my hearers, and I then amused them for a time with imitations of bird notes and some variations of my own on old familiar airs. As I was playing "Home, Sweet Home" with my own variations, at Mark Ashton's special request, his face twice gleaming in rapid succes-

sion as if internal flashes of light spread over it, he arose and walked hastily into the library.

This peculiar light cannot always mean anger. Perhaps it is any very strong mental or emotional excitement.

One pleasing thing about the evening's enjoyment was this—the people of Ashton Hall seemed as unrestrainedly happy as their guests.

Oct. 14th, 18—.

I have a new pupil. Helena Ashton is determined to add to her many accomplishments that of violin playing, and I have been appointed her instructor.

I have warned her faithfully that even a partial mastery of the wonderful instrument is no easy task, and a much more difficult undertaking to one like herself whose time is so fully monopolized with social engagements and her daily piano practice. She will hear of no objections. Of course, she is the only one to be consulted as it is well understood that her rule in Ashton Hall is absolute, her pleasure in regard to herself is her only law, and so the experiment is to be tried. I am not at all sanguine of success—not that I doubt her ability—but the conditions are such as to imply many interruptions, and violin playing is a matter of many years of faithful practice even to those having natural talent for it—and I have premonitions I shall not long remain in W——e.

"I have but one request to make," said she, when we were discussing terms and fixing hours, "and that is that you will be a merciless critic and at the end of the term if you think I have no prospect of becoming a creditable performer on the violin, you will tell me so candidly and I will not pursue it farther."

To this I agreed, and so it was arranged; I am to give her three lessons per week.

The evening Mr. Ashton spoke to me about it, pleasantly enough, I could see he had something more he wished to say, but hardly had settled in his mind the best way of saying it. He asked my opinion of her as a

musician, of her prospects of success with the violin, and then continued:

, "I am very glad it has fallen to your lot to become her teacher, not only from your knowledge and skill as a musician, but also because you are not likely, as some young men would be, to forget the clear distinctions of society, nor to presume in any way upon your position. The position of private tutor to an heiress, I need hardly say, is one that involves great trust and confidence upon the part of the head of the house. Many, I fear, in your position would forget that they entered Ashton Hall solely as a teacher; I am sure Mr. Molson is not among their number."

I replied with some ardor, "I am not apt to forget the distance socially between a young musician like myself, struggling with poverty, and the heiress of Ashton Hall. And if I were disposed to forget such painful topics, there are those who will not permit me to forget them."

"I meant no offense, whatever," said Mr. Ashton. "I said what I did with the kindest intent. Young blood is hot and impatient, but some day you will bear more patiently the well-meant admonitions of those much older than yourself. I do not blame you, however, for your free style of speaking."

Oct. 17th, 18—.

I do not disguise from myself the fact that my pupil at Ashton Hall monopolizes more of my thought and attention than any one pupil should. Why this should be so is somewhat difficult to say. Possibly because she is the most prominent socially, or the most advanced pupil of my class, or the most beautiful lady in W——e. It seems the stranger that I should give her so much thought and—as I see from looking over my diary—so much attention in my written reflections, as from the very first I have felt a very decided impression of her deficiencies, her inferiority in many ways to her sister Lucille, and the more especially as I have a deep contempt for the artificialities, hypocrisies and hollow mock-

ery of that fashionable world in which she lives, moves and has her being.

Probably it is because she suggests a problem to the mind, an enigma to be solved, and the riddle seems to be this: How can such physical perfection be associated with a spiritual nature largely dead, or at least dormant? But I will not philosophize.

One thing I am determined on since the first evening's bitter experience at Ashton Hall, and especially since Mr. Ashton's candid statement a few nights ago, and it is this: I shall guard the citadel of my thoughts against even her physical charms. I feel very sure I need never guard my heart, for my heart could never be disturbed seriously by one so palpably deficient—as I know she is—in the diviner qualities of true womanhood, such as human sympathy and true spirituality.

No; I shall leave Mr. Molson, the man, the creature of flesh and blood, in the hall along with my hat and gloves and cane, and only Mr. Molson the teacher shall enter the drawing room of Ashton Hall.

Oct. 18th, 18—.

I have hesitated before attempting any description of to-day's experience because I realize I cannot put into words or imprint on the cold page of paper what the mind enjoys and the heart feels so exquisitely. I hesitate still to attempt an account of experiences in which every moment seemed jeweled with a joy.

The Record of a Perfect Day.

Were I to select out of all the days memory holds dear and sacred, this I should choose as the happiest of my life. The delightful air and sunshine, charming social enjoyment, pleasing landscape, and flow of thought and emotion through all its hours made the day a perfect one.

I wonder if there are good and evil days. My college chum at Leipsic used to say so, but he is an astrologer and believes that the planets by their conjunctions or

opposition bless or injure us. He declares that some days we catch harmonious vibrations and some days, discordant ones; that some days the good angels get nearer us than ordinarily, and then we are unaccountably happy, life is a song of joy, the birds sing more sweetly than usual, the flowers are more fragrant, the faces and voices of our friends are more beautiful and enjoyable; and some days the vibrations of life are full of jars and discords.

I awoke with a merry, hopeful feeling. Life seemed sweet, the earth was beautiful, men and women seemed good and lovable creatures, evil in the world was a vanishing and negligible quantity, and what is stranger, my usual sense of loneliness was gone. I felt I had many friends, good and true, and no enemies, and if there were difficulties in my path, well, I could and would overcome them. So I felt all the morning.

The atmosphere was exhilarating, cool and balmy as the ordinary October weather. Everybody, too, looked better and more cheerful than usual.

I really fancied that Mark Ashton looked like a saint as I saw him enter the bank, and even Parish had a glow of spirituality in his face. Query: Were their faces really different to me or did I see them through a spiritual light suffused about myself? I have a theory that every human being shines as a light in the spiritual universe and that sometimes our light is brighter than at other times and everything we see is suffused with our own soul glow.

I had not been long in the office at work before I was favored with two visitors, Miss Ashton and Miss Lucille. They came in with pretty apologies for trespassing, but evidently in a very jolly mood and as Miss Lucille said, to ask a favor, and when once inside, each looked to the other to state the nature of the request.

There was a somewhat awkward pause for a moment and then both burst into a merry bit of laughter. I am usually very sensitive and ordinarily would have felt much inclined to demand an explanation but my high spirits and the atmosphere of mirth they brought with

them, set me to laughing before I knew the cause of their glee.

"We have had a serious quarrel, Mr. Molson," said Helena.

"Yes, I observe you are very angry with each other," I replied.

"We quarreled about you, too," said Miss Lucille with a merry twinkle in her eye. "I think Helena is a very mean sister to shirk her duty like this. She promised if I would start to tell you of our troubles she would finish, and here she is backing out in a most cowardly way."

"I am afraid if you come asking for sympathy or aid, you will have to present more rueful countenances than you do. You are a pretty pair of beggars or a pair of pretty beggars—now aren't you?" I said joining in the fun.

They both bowed low in mock acknowledgement of the compliment.

"Mr. Molson," said Miss Ashton, "we are in difficulty. For over a week we have been planning our little family picnic—an annual affair—to Chestnut Island in the river which Mr. Ashton owns and where, as you know, we have a summer cottage. Mr. Ashton always takes us in a boat and prefers to do his own rowing rather than be bothered with a boatman. After we got all our arrangements made, Lucille had herself prepared the chicken salad and biscuits and I had made the cake (for you know in our yearly picnic we do our own cooking, wait on ourselves and allow no one but a member of the family to be present) Mr. Ashton dashed all our hopes to earth again by telling us that a New York broker had just telegraphed him to be at his office without fail. He cannot go. So we come, on his suggestion, to make our appeal to you and beg your knightly aid."

"It is as boatman, I presume, you wish to engage me," I asked.

"Oh, no, you are to be official representative of Mark Ashton Banking Co. and guard the life and fortune of two princesses and high honors and rewards await the successful performance of your duties."

"And pray what rewards for such heavy responsibility?" I asked.

"You are to preside at the royal festivities on Chestnut Island, share the royal lunch basket, and receive a royal vote of thanks."

"Agreed," I said and in half an hour we were off. It was a short but delightful pull to the island and by ten o'clock our lunch baskets were safely stowed away in "Rest Cottage" and we had started to explore the island of about six acres. It was covered, as the name implies, with an abundant growth of chestnut trees and a sufficiency of other timber to afford ample shade, leaving here and there an open space and some greensward for picnic grounds and games. There are some lovely walks about the shores, a commodious boat-house, and near the boat-house is "Rose Arbor" covered with honeysuckle and clematis and other flowering plants. "Rest Cottage," nicely situated on a hillock near the shore, was amply supplied for a summer residence—though the Banker has generally been too busy to enjoy its cooling shade and fine prospect. An extended view of the country was visible to the west but on the north and east the hills and cliffs surrounding the bends of the river shut out the prospect. We were the only inhabitants of the island at the time.

We spent a couple of hours in rambling aimlessly about the island, explored the cavern on the east side, gathered nuts from the hickory trees and ferns from the lowlands, and thoroughly succeeded, I think, in becoming children again.

It seemed to me I had never seen these young ladies before—so entirely had they thrown off the restraints and conventionalities of Ashton Hall, so merry in mood, so versatile in conversation, so determined to be happy for the day and make me happy as their companion. They laughed, chatted and joked each other incessantly, and I, in turn, came in for a fair share of their banter, and it seemed to me ere night had come they had transformed themselves into a score or more of different characters. From grave to gay, from lively to severe, from religion to politics, from fun to philosophy, from life to death,

from orthodoxy to agnosticism, the flow of talk never ceased, except during our impromptu entertainment in Rest Cottage.

I myself was transformed—whether it was the atmosphere that intoxicated me, or whether it was the joy of coming into touch with nature again after imprisonment in the office, or whether it was the influence of the stars, or whether I caught the infection of their good humor and wit and was for a time bewitched by two faces each lovely in its way and by two personalities each more interesting from the other's presence, or by a combination of all of these, I cannot say. I was another character that day.

I lost my native timidity and restraint. I was always much repressed by others—except when the inspiration of music was upon me—but here I felt liberated and inspired and had a gift of expression and a power of enjoyment, that seemed to me then—and ever since—as a most exceptional experience.

We next spent about an hour in the Rose Arbor resting and enjoying the sight of the flowing river on which the bright sunshine was dancing in countless images of sparkling light and listening to its low undertones of melody, and to the birds chirping away in the branches which were fast loosing their heavy summer foliage, and to the squirrels chattering over their gathered nuts for the winter. One of these—a red squirrel, came circling down a tree to where Miss Lucille sat—a few feet at a time—exploring with eager eyes our party as we sat in full view, and creeping nearer and nearer until he was only some eight or ten feet away. Here he stationed himself to take a more deliberate look and seemed to be satisfied of our pacific intentions yet, after one or two attempts to draw a little closer, hesitated. Miss Lucille interpreted his thoughts for us: "So you like us, Mr. Red Squirrel, you like us, but you don't fully trust us. You think discretion the better part of valor. You feel you wish to know more of our history, of our antecedents, of our views on the mutual relations of man and his fellow animals. Well, the best way to learn about us—the best way for men to learn about each other—is to trust. Yes,

of course, there's danger in it—but less danger than in suspicion."

She stopped. The squirrel had cunningly turned his head to one side as if to catch every word. He seemed to like her sweet soft voice and to increase his confidence in the company for he ventured further and leaped nimbly over on the end of our bench and sat up with his paws gracefully bent down, his bright eye sparkling with interest and pleasure, his sleek coat shining and his large bushy tail curved over his head.

A sudden inspiration seized Lucille. "Wait," said she "I'll capture him. I know how to tempt squirrels and children." She went back to the cottage and got some biscuits, came back and scattered crumbs along the bench—from which the squirrel had retreated for a time—and in her hand she had a pole on the end of which was a netted bag used for catching minnows for baiting larger fish. The pole she extended along the bench retaining one end in her hand and then seated herself and began talking again to Mr. Bright Eyes, who was eyeing every movement from his safe retreat on the side of the tree. He answered with a friendly chirp and thus the conversation went on for a few minutes—Bright Eyes venturing nearer and still nearer to his old position, paused a moment as before and then took the final leap landing on the end of the bench. He picked up in teeth and paw the first bit of biscuit—sat erect, ate it quickly and advanced to the second. This was the last available until he had passed the netted bag lying on one side of the bench. This he eyed curiously for a moment—turned his gaze again on the path of biscuit chips—and was lost.

He leaped past the bag, seized another bit of the biscuit, ate it ravenously and with evident enjoyment.

"So you approve my make of biscuits," said Miss Lucille, "so we may quote you as endorsing my brand as the very best on the market—Beware! Beware!—greed and appetite have led many a one to his doom. Beware, young man, I'm fooling you, beware! Take care!" She moved her hand and Bright Eyes, frightened, swiftly turned and leaped into the expanded mouth of the net.

"Oh the deceitful ways of women. I'll never trust another," I said in pretended horror of her crime.

"Oh the folly and wilful blindness of the men. They cannot resist temptation. They leap right into the net before their eyes—and that after being warned repeatedly!" she replied.

"This is a moral drawn for your instruction—a sort of acted parable. Now what does it teach, think you, Mr. Molson?"

"It says, 'beware of women bestowing favors,'" I replied.

"Nothing of the kind," said she. "It simply says, 'Look before you leap!' See our unhappy captive."

"Happier than I am," I replied, "for he has had his dinner."

This brought forth a chorus of laughter and Miss Helena said: "You poor, starved boatman and woodman and banker and knight errant, all in one, you shall have a dinner fit for the gods. Come to the banqueting hall." She led the way.

And while I enjoyed the Chickering piano in the sitting room they donned their aprons, busied themselves with the coming meal. Miss Lucille presided over the kitchen and lighted the fires, warmed the viands, made the coffee, while Helena, as I could see from my seat at the piano, opened the hampers, set the table, spread the snowy napery upon it, arranged the ferns we had gathered into table ornaments, and wove three chaplets of maple leaves we had gathered—painted by the Frost King into tints of green and gold and saffron and amber and red—and laid them by the three plates.

When the bell rang and I came out we had before us, not a full course dinner, but such a royal luncheon as will at once satisfy hunger and please the esthetic taste by the variety and delicacy of its viands.

There were warm biscuits, chicken and other salads, jellies and custards, olives and grapes and most delicious coffee and a bottle of home-made wine.

"It was a whim of Papa Ashton's," said Miss Helena "to institute these family picnics and to have no one outside the family assist us. Every dish Lucille and I have

prepared, the wine is home made—so be careful how you criticise the cookery. Cooks are violent tempered. Beware, sir!" she said with warning glance. "You are the first stranger ever admitted into our family picnic."

"I congratulate myself a thousand times!" I said.

"And you must abide by family rules. Put on your chaplet, sir," and she handed me my leafy crown which I donned with mock gravity.

Both the young ladies unloosed their tresses and encircled their brows with the maple leaves explaining it was their custom so to do, and I must confess they made pretty pictures. It was to me a most enjoyable banquet, chiefly for the perfectly harmonious feeling I experienced and the charm, both of the presence and speech of these two beautiful women, who were always seen to best advantage together and certainly today they were at their best. They were simply attired as befitted the occasion but this only added to the beauty of both face and figure in my estimation as there was nothing to detract from their personal charms of form and manner and speech.

After the meal was over we gathered in the sitting room, where the piano and my violin absorbed attention for a time. Miss Helena reclined amidst the cushions of the sofa, her head resting on her arm and her face turned toward us, and her long dark tresses unconfined. Miss Lucille got a low stool and sat near her while I played a favorite sonata from Schubert.

"What shall we do this afternoon?" I asked.

"We have always had an impromptu program among ourselves," said Lucille," and I am mistress of ceremonies here. 'Let's pretend' as the school children say. Master Molson, ladies and gentlemen, will now give his first public performance on the violin."

I imitated as best I could the boy's first public performance on the violin and judging by the plaudits, succeeded very well.

"Miss Helena Ashton—will now favor us with a piano solo. Come, my little dear, don't be afraid of the ladies and gentlemen," coaxingly said Miss Lucille as she led Helena along to the piano.

"I can't pretend," said Miss Helena, "My nature is too rigidly honest you see, so I'll play my favorite waltz." And she played an unpublished one of her own composition, and the music caught us all up into its flow and movement, inspired and enthralled us.

Then a strange thing happenend. As the beautiful music poured forth in such delightful flow and harmony from her fingers and my mind became more and more captivated and inspired by it, then for some reason I looked toward the opposite corner of the room, and I saw a patch of milky, flaky cloud floating a little distance from the wall and about the height of a person's head above the floor. It grew more dense and compact and then seemed to open out and at the same time my vision became so penetrating I could look apparently through the walls encompassing us and far, far into the distance. And this is what I thought I saw:

THE VISION.

A rugged mountain peak, bare and grim, and on it, sporting about in the most entrancing way, a girl—or fairy—for so light and graceful were her movements, I could scarcely believe her human. She had ruddy cheeks, a clear black eye, jet black tresses and a body so full of the graceful poetry of motion that its movements were more like the shifting colored lights on some bubbling fountain, than the slower movements of the human form.

Back and forth, with smiles and ringing laughter, she flitted and flashed before me as though intoxicated with joy and as the music reached a sudden turn she ran down the mountain side to where the shrubbery grew, plucked a branch containing leaves and red berries and came back, laughing in her glee.

Then she smote the rock with her wand of leaves and berries and cried out, "Come, come away with me to the sea, to the sea!" and I saw then a tiny stream, pure as molten silver, running down the mountain side and the fairy laughing and shouting in her glee kept running beside the brook and beating its limpid waters with her wand and shouting, "Come away, Come away, with me to the sea," and I, too, seemed to keep pace with the running brook. I heard its musical tinkle as it leaped from rock to basin and from basin to rock, turning, whirling, dashing, crashing down the glen—now in shadow and now in sunshine, now o'er pebbly bottom and now o'er shining sands.

On and on the music flowed and on and on rushed the

noisy rivulet and on and on ran the fairy, through light and shade, through the open lands and through the tangled wildwood, leaping over the waterfalls and lingering in the little eddies and pools, cutting deeper and deeper banks through the meadows and channels through the rocks. Sometimes it was winding slowly over gentle declivities and then with headlong dash rushing forward and ever and ever singing, singing with all of us in our glee while the Fairy flicked her wand over the frightened waters and shouted, "Come, away, away, away with me to the sea."

And now it seemed morning. The birds were all waking and singing their matin song. The sun was kissing the mountain peaks and the tallest of the trees were stretching their long branches to bathe in his glory. There were dew drops glimmering or sparkling on every leaf. The beautiful ferns were bending over the streamlet's banks and from their tips diamond drops fell musically into the laughing waters.

Then again we were whirling through a fairy land of flowers, of so many, many hues and delicious perfume filled the air. Flowers, flowers, flowers—what a wilderness of flowers, in bud and opening glory and full bloom, and, strange as may sound the story, they were singing every one its hymn of praise, some in such tiny vibrations I could sense rather than hear them, others in full and clear chorus. I could hear the flower buds opening to music. I could hear the sunshine singing in its way from heaven to earth.

And now again it was eventide. Twilight in all its holy hush and calm was on us. The music flowed on evenly and peacefully. There was a silent prayer in every breath—a sense of worship in every heart. I saw the glory of the sun in the crimson cloud banks of the west—the deepening shade of night spread over us—I saw the evening star and the moon rising over the eastern hills.

Then the rivulet was changed. The little rill became a deep and turbid stream and the music became more grave, majestic, solemn and sad as the sluggish stream wound its way along through a grove of pines and we heard the night winds sigh and moan through the pine tree tops like the moan of the lost souls of men, and we heard the rising tempest amidst the tasseled leaves of the old pines crying and sobbing with grief that seemed to have in it all the human heart had ever known of sorrow and of woe. And then our stream passed low, damp ground and with lazy motion among the reeds and vines and trailing creepers and our Fairy whisked her wand in vain to coax the sluggish waters on, till at last we came again to open ground and joining others streams began to rush forward more impetuously till we joined in the full roar and chorus of many waters leaping into the sea.

* * * * * *

The music ceased. And still I stood gazing. The

cloud had disappeared. The walls and furniture of my room and my companions again became visible.

The young ladies with startled faces were beside me asking if I was ill.

It was just then that I began to experience what had come upon me twice before, once in the grand concert hall at Leipsic after a wonderful overture from the Orchestra, and once before in the "Williams" home at the close of a two-hour family concert. Let me describe it if I can.

First, there was a numbness in my right arm spreading up and down from the elbow until it felt like an arm of lead hanging to my shoulder, with now and then a prickling sensation shooting through it. Then it became alive again, and full of of vitality, but, strange to say, I seemed to have a curious sensation in my brain. I was circling about. No—I was rising up, up, up. It seemed as though my brain was floating. I felt a wonderful power of enjoyment—a grand inspiration to do and dare and at such a moment I could have faced the largest and most critical audience with confidence.

"Wait," I cried. "Wait, I am going to tell you the story of my life (and the words seemed new and strange) —the story of my life. I will interpret it as I go along."

Then I seized my violin and bow and announced: "The Song of Rejoicing over his Birth," and there poured forth from my instrument such a voice of human joy and gladness as any hearer could readily interpret. Every note seemed palpitating with inexpressible delight. In that moment I seemed not only to have the gift of artistic creation but also the power to interpret my work. I could grasp the full significance of every tone and of every change in the music.

"The Song of Childhood," I announced, and the streams of music flowed on and on, pure and sweet and harmonious, with here and there a minor strain of sorrow.

"Youthful Sorrows," I next called out, and here the music took a pensive strain and there stole over us as we listened—for I seemed no less an auditor than the others—a sense of loneliness and mystery and longing

that I saw reflected in the faces of the two young women. On and on the music went and told its story, mingled with sunshine and shade, laughter and tears, mystery and longing till the mist of tears had gathered in all our eyes. And next I announced "The Battle of Life," and here the music was of a martial type—the trumpet calls, the steady march, the inspiring music, the sudden charge, the roar and clash of battle, and then the cries and curses of the wounded, the anguish and despair of the dying—all was poured forth or sobbed out of that living, palpitating, seemingly sensitive thing I held in my arms—till we saw and heard and felt ourselves in the midst of life's heroism and suffering and tragedy. Then a pause and the strains were sober and more even and breathed a spirit of fixed purpose and courage into our hearts. And then I shouted, "The Picnic of To-day," and the music laughed and trilled from the vibrating strings, full of merriment and song till we all recognized the description as true. We saw again each island scene, heard the song of the birds and the chirp of the squirrels, and the music of the river, and felt that sense and elation of joy that had marked the day thus far. The music seemed to say: "Earth is beautiful, men are good, the star of hope shines in every man's firmament. Heaven is near us. Angels are singing. Be happy! My children, be happy!"

"The Future," I announced, and here the theme seemed weird and ominus. We felt that the light was fading, and clouds were gathering. We seemed beating against an ocean storm; night and cloud and darkness had fallen and the billows were becoming maddened by the breath of the storm-king and tossing us hither and thither on their fury. I saw the scene that was being portrayed by my hand and shuddered as it became more and more real—till the shock of the vision seemed to break the flow of the music.

There was silence and I stood looking into space and watching the mountain billows of this magic scene, as they chased each other out of sight, when I saw Mark Ashton—saw him as I saw him in my dream vision with the pale face and wound in his temple. Then I heard again another cry and saw another form riding the crest

of a wave and again I saw it as the waters turned the face toward me. It was Helena—with the phosphorescent sea light gleaming on her face and heaving bosom.

* * * *

I turned my face to the sofa—and she was lying in the exact position, her head on her arm and the long, dark tresses falling in confusion over her bosom now agitated with fear and dread and her lustrous black eyes full of sympathy. I grew sick and dizzy as I cried: "Thank God—'tis only a dream vision." I was dizzy and faint with fatigue.

She offered me the sofa and handed me a glass of wine and I apologized and begged them to forget my hallucination, and made the best excuse I could under the circumstances.

Then I chatted again gaily, and to relieve the awkwardness of this one note of discord, I offered to answer any question proposed to me—if I could.

"What is your ideal of happiness in this world?" Miss Ashton promptly asked.

"My ideal of happiness," I replied, "is made up of the following ingredients: good health and good mentality, knowledge of nature and art, a love of truth and right, appreciation of life's common blessings, a few good books and a few good friends, and enough daily labor to strengthen and invigorate the body and not enough to absorb all one's energies and prevent self-culture."

"And where do wealth and position in society come in?" she asked.

"Nowhere, necessarily," I answered. "If they come in at all, near the bottom of the list."

"Alas! Alas!" she cried, whether in feigned or real emotion I have never been able to satisfy myself, "Don't you see, sir, you are putting me at the bottom of the list. It is very cruel of you when you know I have only two qualifications for happiness to wipe them off the slate before my face. A fig for your gallantry!"

"But you have all the other claims as well," I said, "only perhaps you do not attach the right relative importance to them."

"But surely wealth has great advantage and vastly enlarges one's power and opportunities!" she said.

"Very true," I answered, "and a man or woman is simply foolish to ignore that fact and pretend to despise wealth, but as a factor in happiness it is very much overestimated. And then few stop to consider how great the disadvantages of wealth."

"And what are they?" she asked.

"Many and serious," I replied, "the one being that the rich man seldom know his true friends. Wealth surrounds one with flatterers and place-hunters, and brings but few true friends as a rule. Another disadvantage is, one seldom learns to correctly estimate himself if he is rich. Everything he does has a value and greatness reflected upon it by this mammon-worship. And so the rich man sees himself in the light of a golden candlestick. Gold throws its glamour over us and prevents a proper estimate of ourselves and others. And still another thing," I added, "it presents constant temptations to us to measure life's success by our bank account, and to forget the great mission of life which is growth and development."

"Say no more—say no more," cried Miss Ashton. "We shall all want to leave the world and go to a convent!" I thought she was angry.

"It is my turn now," said Miss Lucille. "I notice, Mr. Molson," said she, "that your ideal happy man is a bachelor. How dare you condemn womanhood in the present company? Don't you see," said she, threateningly, "your present isolated and dangerous position?"

"I am surely in the minority," I said, "and confess the serious omission I made. Place it to the credit of haste as I only summarized in quick reply to the questions from memory some of my noble teacher's words. The solitary life can never be as happy as one lived in happy home relations and yet many a single life is richly dowered with bliss. If all married lives were as perfect as those at "The Willows" I would say marriage is a consummation devoutly to be wished."

"You spoke," said Miss Lucille, "about appreciating

life's common blessings. What are they and how can we learn to appreciate them?"

"Such blessings," I replied, "as health, strength, intelligence, the common privilege we all have of sharing the beauties and the harmonies of nature, the common privileges of growth and enlargement of our being!

"Who, for example appreciates as he should the music of that river, the song of the sea, the glories of a sunset, the beauty of the autumn maple leaf—one of the loveliest pictures on earth, inferior only to the human face divine.

"We pine, and sigh for the wealth of the millionaire that we may have costly paintings on our walls, and yet we trample under our feet in our mad and eager rush for wealth, the divine art pictures of the autumn leaves. We want the painted mountain, or river or sea shore on our canvasses, mere counterfeits of nature's glory, and fail to appreciate nature's art gallery spread before us, without money or price!

"I am fully of Mrs. Williams' opinion that men need nothing so much to enhance life's enjoyment as the ability to see beauty and truth and goodness all around them in nature, in every day life and in their fellow men. The eye to see, the soul to appreciate, the spirituality to enjoy—this is worth more than wealth or position or fame."

Helena sprang from her seat, her countenance all aglow and coming over to where I sat, said, "Let me shake hands with you and confess. I was a little angry with you a few moments ago because—because I thought you ignored what most people value highly and what I have been led to value highly as well. I am sure you meant no offense—and that you spoke sincerely and also that you spoke the truth. Let me thank you—your words and sentiments have often pained me but I believe not without profit. Now I shall respect myself more—that I have done what is right."

She said it so sincerely and with such an air of sweet penitence that I was too charmed and agitated to do more than stammer out my thanks.

"You have told us nothing" said Miss Lucille "about your ideal woman!"

"Pray don't start Mr. Molson on that topic," said Miss Helena. "His ideal will be so far above our poor earthly realization that it will discourage all our effort."

"I have never consciously attempted to draw an ideal character for woman any more than for man," I replied, "but feel much inclined to accept that drawn in the XXXI chapter of Proverbs, or the living portrait, clothed in flesh and blood, at 'The Willows,' my friend and teacher, Mrs. Williams." I stopped suddenly for I seldom think of Mrs. Williams and her lofty ideals and teachings but there rises up in my mind the thought of my mother whose face I have seen only in a dim image of childhood's memory and in my dreams.

"I would give the world," I cried, "if I had it, for a few moments' vision of my mother's face!" and I rushed out of the cottage with a sob in my throat to hide and quiet my agitation.

When I returned the cloud had passed from my sky and we all joined in singing old time songs till the house re-echoed our music and glee.

The moon rose over the eastern hills and flooded all the landscape and river with silvery whiteness as we glided peacefully down the stream on our return journey.

"This has been a day of very rich pleasure to me," said Miss Lucille, as I left them at Ashton Hall, "and you have placed us under a deep debt of gratitude, Mr. Molson."

"There now," cried Miss Helena, "you have said your thanks so prettily that my poor words must fail. I hope Mr. Molson will not think us ungrateful for this very happy day."

I bade them good night and went back to my room to dream and muse for hours over the pleasantest day of all my life.

N. Y., Oct. 19th, 18—.

Affairs move on smoothly at the Bank, and I am

becoming fully conversant with my duties and appear to be giving satisfaction. Mr. Ashton seems pleased with the work and shows himself sociable and friendly. He evidently desires to stand well with his subordinates as he chats freely with Mr. Parish and occasionally seeks to draw one or the other of us out in conversation. I have heard no more about his foreclosure of mortgages or his scheme of collecting $500,000 this Fall for some purpose after the holidays. Rumors I have heard from Herbert and Parish are to the effect that Miss Ashton is to wed a New York millionaire and that the "tidy little sum" is her marriage dowry—an indication of something larger later on. Others say it is a prince from Germany whom she is to wed. Idle gossip, perhaps.

Writing of Miss Ashton I must record the interruption to her music lessons through the injury of her arm in stopping a runaway horse on the streets last Thursday. I was fortunate enough to witness it at a distance but unfortunately not near at hand in time to render her any assistance. From those near by we learned full particulars and a most gallant and heroic act it was. It happened thus:

Dr. Galbraith, who has occasionally attended Miss Ashton for her nervous headaches, had left his horse standing in front of the Wauregan Hotel and his little son about six years of age in the rig. The animal had been accustomed to stand securely without tying, while the father made his short professional calls, the little boy, a delicate, beautiful child with light golden hair, sitting in the seat and proudly holding the reins. A detachment of the Salvation Army came down the street and coming around the adjacent corner suddenly, the Doctor's horse took fright and started up the street at a brisk trot, the lad meantime terrified and crying out for help. By the time Pine Street was reached the animal was breaking into a run and the child reeling about in the narrow seat in imminent danger of being injured or killed. Many saw the runaway but no way of rescuing the child with any safety to themselves. Miss Ashton and Lucille were just then emerging from a store and took in the situation at a glance, the now thoroughly af-

frighted steed coming directly up the street at a rapid pace, the boy with pallid face in the rig too frightened then to speak, the crowd of men and women on the walks and street, but no one daring to attempt a rescue.

"For the love of heaven stop the horse, save the boy," Miss Ashton shouted in ringing tones to a half dozen young men and older ones near her, and as no one entered the path, she sprang from the walk and reached the middle of the road a few yards in advance of the horse, which slackened its gait a trifle and sheered to one side, but the brave girl had poised herself, and leaping directly at the horse's head and catching the rein, was dragged for a few yards upon the ground. The horse's pace, however, had been lowered by her brave act and the timid observers so inspired thereby, that a dozen hands soon had the animal by the bit. She was found uninjured save a severe wrenching of her arm and some slight bruises. On reaching her room, she fainted, it is said, but was soon restored. Her lessons are over for a time, at least. It was a noble deed.

And so that divine quality of the noblest human souls, that which links humanity into sympathetic union and inspires all noble purposes and deeds, that germ of the God nature which leads to all self-sacrifice and heroic devotion to another's good, is not dead, only sleeping, in Miss Ashton and waiting its own time for development and manifestation.

What possibilities of ideal womanhood lie hidden beneath the surface in the character of that proud girl. I often ponder these questions now and ask, Will the soul come to the marble statue?

Oct. 20th, 18—.

The Williamses came to town today and Mr. and Mrs. Williams spent an hour in my studio and lunched with Herbert and me. Oh, how good it seems amidst a sea of strange countenances in the city to look upon the calm, serene face of my dear friend and teacher sitting at the same table with me and to hear her quiet but always interesting and instructive conversation, and to see

John Eben Williams again looking in silent admiration at his wife and drinking each word from her lips as a believer in the ancient oracles did from the lips of his priestess. They brought in many little presents from the farm, including a barrel of our choice apples from my favorite tree and Mr. Williams told me that the bay gelding, a handsome three year old colt, was being broken in and with a new cutter and harness and robe was a present awaiting my acceptance on my next visit to "The Willows.' Surely few orphans ever fell into such kindly hands. I now begin to think that I never appreciated as I should my home there. Along with sweet sisterly messages from Laura and Maud came the announcement that in holiday week there would be a grand House Party at 'The Willows' and I and Herb were to keep ourselves free for the festivities. "Remember" added Mrs. Williams "that 'The Willows' is the home nest and you and Herbert are both to regard it as your own until you get homes of your own. If you are ever sick or low spirited or in trouble, come at once to the home nest." How could I thank that noble woman, my childhood's best friend, my patient teacher, and from whose lips I had imbibed many a noble thought and principle that I am persuaded, if I can only follow them, will impart grace and beauty and strength to my life. I could not express my thanks for all her goodness, but few sons ever loved a mother more and I turned from her with moistened eyes as I said farewell.

Still the veil hangs between us and that she is as conscious of it as I am, I know and I know also quite well that, with all her love for me and womanly self-sacrifice; she will never lift that veil of her own accord and reveal the secrets of my past life.

I often wish I had the power of mind-reading and then I wonder, too, if I would be happier if I knew all—perhaps not.

Oct. 24th, 18—.

Parish reports large progress in collections and that his New York trip was a great success. Mr. Ashton is giving increased attention to business.

He seems, on the whole a very happy man and particularly so at times. I notice, as he rests a moment occasionally from business, that a look of serene satisfaction steals over his face. And the look of happiness upon his face in these moments of respite from toil, is not the look of gratification which the miser wears over his increased gains and nothing like the look, the horrid look, that I shall never forget, which I saw on his face on the night of our first conference. Oh, no, it is a look that refers to the home and tells me he has found rest and comfort and the fulfilment of his plans and purposes there. Possibly the rumors of Miss Ashton's marriage to the wealthy stock broker, L—— M——, are correct. Possibly, too, some higher ambition of the Banker is to be fulfilled in the union of the heiress with a representative of the old world aristocracy whom she is said to have met in New York last season.

The Banker's face in repose has a look which says:—"My plans are working well. I have a right to be and am, happy."

N. Y., Oct. 27, 18—.

I have just been reading over the entries in my diary for the past two months and am thoroughly disgusted with myself. I find over half my entries have been about Miss Ashton—her face, her figure, her musical ability, her questions, her lessons, and my visits to Ashton Hall and my work there, and my impressions of this, that and the other, concerning Miss Ashton—and all that kind of trash and nonsense!

Lucky for my reputation for sanity and my own self-respect, that these pages will never meet the glance of other eyes than mine. I would soon lose what little reputation for good judgment I now enjoy.

Miss Ashton's life touches upon my own at one point and one point only and that possibly, and very probably, for a few weeks only. For an hour and a half a week I am her paid instructor, just as Brown is her paid confectioner, Smith her paid jeweler, Jones her paid dentist and a score or more of ladies and gentlemen are

her paid performers at her musicales and social gatherings. Before these lessons, during them and after they are over, if I am true to myself, true to the Banker's confidence in me, true to the lessons urged upon me from the voiceless lips of my own father through the "Unknown Friend,' I am not a young man full of the life and fire of manhood, with susceptible heart and capable of loving and being loved—I am an automaton, a human machine for producing in a purely mechanical way a certain desired result—not a man—I am an impersonal entity—a teacher! I am supposed to be as cold and unmovable as an ocean rock. I wonder if I am and if I can preserve this purely negative character!

One thing now begins to trouble me; it is this: I could not have thought and written so much about the heiress of Ashton Hall without, I fear, showing in my words and conduct some special interest in that one pupil.

Perhaps I have been too much dazzled by beauty, by the sparkle of her conversation, by the charms of her gracious manner and betrayed my thought and feeling!

I am glad this thought has occurred to me in good season. Whatever mistake I may have made in the past, no one shall have cause to complain in the future.

And then how little I have conversed with or been interested in her sister—who is, by the way, a far more perfect character and who seems glad to efface herself entirely in the presence of the heiress, so great is her modesty and her love and admiration for Helena.

Yes, I am very glad I discovered this errancy of thought in time—for it might lead, if indulged in persistently, to some disturbance of my affections which as yet are happily untouched. I hardly think there is the slightest danger of that, however, since I have seen, from the first, many grave deficiencies in Miss Ashton which would be impossible if I were at all infatuated, since Cupid is blind. I am resolved now:

1. To limit my stay at Ashton Hall strictly to the lesson hour cutting off all those informal yet delightful little conversations I have had with my pupil at the close of each lesson.

2. If for any reason, I remain a longer time than the lesson hour, it shall be to show interest and courtesy to Miss Lucille, whose moral worth I am fully persuaded is vastly superior to Miss Helena's and who deserves for all her kindness much more courtesy than I fear I have shown her.

3. I shall go out more socially and in the presence of other ladies shall seek to break effectually the charm Miss Ashton's beauty seems to cast over my thoughts, for I am fully persuaded it has not affected any other part of my being.

N. Y., Nov. 1st, 18—.

I feel that I am gradually increasing my hold on the music-loving people of W——e. My class grows slowly but steadily, and most of my pupils make satisfactory progress. Concert engagements, too, are encouragingly numerous and I am getting a better class of patrons than at first. I see that my connection with the bank and position as teacher at Ashton Hall is no little advantage in reaching the elite circles of the city. Social invitations—which I heartily detest but find a necessity to one seeking public patronage—are multiplying. The rest of the fall and the winter especially promises to be a very busy and delightful season.

I have, I fancy, thoroughly cured my "thought wandering" toward one of my pupils. In fact I have built up by will-power an impregnable wall about myself which the most piercing glances of beauty's eyes will never be able to penetrate. I believe fully in the power of the will. When it is once thoroughly aroused and issues its command, the fancy and the emotional nature must obey. It is well. Anything else in my condition were utter madness—not to say betrayal of trust. I shall continue this heroic treatment of myself.

W., N. Y., Nov. 3rd, 18—.

If my work as teacher of violin continues the same ratio of growth through the winter, I shall give up my engagement with the bank and launch myself fully as a

professional teacher. Mark Ashton has already proposed to increase my salary and has twice offered to me a lengthy engagement, urging me to make banking my profession. I have no doubt, as he says, there is much more money in it than in music. But I love my calling more every day—feel that this is my work in the world—and shall never give it up.

I think I may congratulate myself on my resolution of Oct. 27th in regard to my pupil at Ashton Hall. That I have succeeded is evident from the fact that Miss Ashton has noted my reserved demeanor and today while hurrying away from the Hall after her lesson in the midst of some questions about the methods and teachers at Leipsic, she asked me pointedly if any one of the family had offended me, as she noted I was exceeding reticent and had not a word to say outside of the lesson, unless it was forced from me, and acted as though the Hall and its people were to be avoided as much as possible.

Of course I apologized, and warmly disclaimed any intentional lack of courtesy and spoke of my increasing engagements. I then quickly turned the conversation and told her she was not practicing as she should. She averred she was practicing more than ever, while I replied that for some reason she did not keep up her progress as at first. "You make breaks in reading occasionally, your notes are not even, your hand is unsteady," I asserted. Strange to say this seemed to please her for she answered quickly, "Now you are my good friend—telling me of my faults" and she called Miss Lucille in from the parlor and said, "Mr. Molson has just convinced me on a point on which I was in doubt. I am not in good condition for work. My time and strength have been overtaxed by social engagements and extra practice. Sometimes I wish there was no such institution as fashionable society. If people could live without all this strain and worry, how much simpler and happier life would be." Then she put her arm around Lucille's neck, kissed her and said, "I shall go away for a month, dear. I will cancel all my engagements at once." And turning to me she said, "You will find me a very erratic pupil, Mr. Molson.

You see I have been terribly spoiled—first pampered and indulged by my own father—then Papa has more than completed the work, and now I am utterly unreliable, and so wretchedly selfish that I am going away to leave all the burden upon her——"

But Lucille had placed her hand over her sister's lips and shut out the pretty confession.

What did the heiress mean? That she was addressing me—more than her sister—I plainly felt and knew but for what purpose? Justifying herself for breaking up my engagement a month? She hardly needed any such elaborate excuse. Or was it a spasm of real penitence over what she begins to feel a frivolous and somewhat useless life?

Or——could it be?—she desired to have a poor violin teacher form a more lenient estimate of her character?

I was pondering these things in my mind as I bade her good-bye when she turned to Lucille and said encouragingly as though the thought contained real comfort for both of them, "But it will all be over soon, won't it, dear?"

What this referred to, I have no means of knowing. My first thought connected it with the rumor of her early marriage.

I don't really know why, if I have cured myself of "mind wandering" the first statement of her penitence should have given me such delight and the last statement of her lips, interpreted as I interpreted it, should have fallen like a pall of gloom over my mind and heart.

W., N. Y., Nov. 4th, 18—.

I think it would be hard to find two firmer, truer friends than Herb and I. We are like Jonathan and David and delight in each other's society and are always glad to help each other—even at a sacrifice.

With such friends as Mrs. Williams and Herb—not to speak of the rest of that noble family—I really should have been ashamed to write as I did in these opening pages of this journal about my lonely life and my for-

lorn condition. Two such friends are enough to enrich any life.

Herb has fine principles, a fund of never-failing good humor, a warm devotion to his friends and excels in conversational powers. He delights in springing surprises on his friends. Last evening as we were chatting gaily in our rooms he sprung his little surprise on me.

"Did you ever have any curiosity?" he asked, "to know who it was who defeated your pet scheme of turning Mrs. Perkins and her children into the streets?"

"Why, yes," I answered. "I did feel quite curious at the time but I soon lost interest after Mrs. Perkins forbade the investigation——."

"Very proper in you as a marriageable young man" continued Herb, "to pay respect scrupulously to the wishes of a pretty widow, with a snug little cottage roof over her head, and a bank deposit—but I am not so much swayed by beauty—and cash. I have been studying the problem a little on the sly—for your sake, since I saw the deep interest you took in her. By the way you took an awful long time that evening to tell her she must move out in two weeks. I think you were there fully two hours."

"Oh, come, have a little shame, Herb," I cried. "Tell us what you have found out. Have you a theory?"

"Yes, anybody can have theory, but only the expert detective like myself—has the correct theory, and facts to prove it. Now what would you say if I told you the Lady Bountiful lives at Ashton Hall?"

"I should say you were dreaming," I replied.

"Precisely, but dreams come true once in a while and this dream of mine will, I assure you, be verified."

"Tell us all you know and never mind about the dreams," I said.

"I shall not satisfy your morbid curiosity," Herb went on banteringly, "for two very good reasons. I am not in a humor to give away the secrets of my new profession merely to gratify idle curiosity, and then I am not through with all my investigations. I have traced the clue through many of its mazes and am ready to state a fact, and to hazard an interpretation. The fact is that

one of the daughters of Mark Ashton gave the money to the widow and I am not yet positively sure which one it was, but I feel quite satisfied it was Miss Helena. Possibly both of them were concerned in it. I have positively traced it—I will not say how just at present—by the aid of a private detective to Ashton Hall. Now my theory is that one of them—we will say Miss Helena for the present—found out that Mark Ashton was about to do that cruel deed and fearing public opinion, or perhaps moved by pity, stepped in opportunely and spoiled the old man's game.

"There's no question in my mind that Mark Ashton is mad—on the money question at least. Intelligent and broad-minded and thoroughly balanced as he seems on all other questions, he is mad on that subject. No one but a mad man would conceive or attempt to carry out his projects of enriching an adopted daughter in the place of his own child. No one but a mad man would cherish the idea of founding a great estate and spend his life piling up millions for some impecunious scion of aristocracy in the old world or some millionaire stockbroker in this, and leave his own flesh and blood in comparative poverty. My opinion is the daughters know he is mad about money questions, and act largely under compulsion in carrying out his whims and caprices. His plans in regard to spending his money don't square at all with his sound sense and wise methods in amassing it, or with his general good judgment. He is a monomaniac—that explains everything.

"Now that Miss Ashton either personally delivered the money or sent some one to do it seems certain—as a woman similarly attired entered the western door of Ashton Hall within an hour of the time when the donation was made. She admitted herself and must, therefore, have been one of the daughters or some one in their confidence. Miss Ashton had a hand in it for the very good reason that she is the only one who could spare any such sum without the fact being known. Every one knows that Miss Lucille has little money or at least spends but little. Miss Helena spends largely not only for Ashton Hall, but on herself and she asks no one, not even the Banker, for authority!"

This seemed to me a most astonishing statement—yet while not ready to accept it I saw no way of refuting it and I begged Herbert to go into detail. But the mischievous rascal saw I was deeply interested and to all my enquiries he offered only good-natured badinage. I plead with him to give me some explanation of how he had traced the donor to Ashton Hall and some evidence, if he could, that the heiress had given the money. He would only affirm that his chain of evidence was complete and would satisfy judge or jury, but it must not be disclosed at present.

"Like all great detectives," he went on, "I am reserving my most startling explanations and discoveries for a grand finale. Possess your soul in patience. Some day you shall hear of my exploits—far surpassing Sherlock Holmes and Lecoq. I am the rising light of the detective fraternity and feel the wings of genius sprouting in—in—my shoulders."

W——e., N. Y., Nov. 6th, 18—.

Herbert and I have had our first quarrel—I am ashamed to say. He is, generally, most amiable but it does seem that when your generally-amiable man or woman takes a fancy for a change of mood, he can be more unreasonable and exasperating in conversation and conduct than the one whose ill humor is spread out more evenly through his life. Perhaps there is just so much "meanness" in every man's nature and it has to come out somewhere, somehow, or sometime, and when a man is really good for a long, long time and has an attack of *"meanness"* it all comes to the surface at once.

I don't know as this is correct; it looks like it in Herbert's case.

It all originated out of a very harmless and very natural remark I made when we were discussing the Ashton people, to the effect that fortune had been very unjust and partial in bestowing the larger measure of talent, beauty and wealth on Miss Helena and slighting Miss Lucille. I had not the faintest idea in the world of saying everything disparaging of the younger daughter—for whom I have the profoundest respect—much less did

I think there could be anything in it to offend my good friend Herb. I was astonished, therefore, when he fired up in an instant and seemed to take it as a personal affront to himself. He contended stoutly that both in good looks and in mental and moral qualities, Miss Lucille was as well endowed as Miss Helena and superior, quite superior, decidedly so in what he called "womanly qualities" and as to "fortune" favoring Miss Helena with money, it was too bad to charge upon that fickle goddess the whims of a mad banker!

It was no use for me to try to pacify him and allay his resentment. All I said seemed only to stir him up more. In vain I assured him of my high opinion of Miss Lucille, and that I was only stating a fact that everyone acknowledged in alluding to Miss Helena's surpassing beauty, and to her brilliancy of wit and superior conversational powers, etc. It was only adding fuel to the flames. He grew quite insolent and made disparaging remarks, not only about the heiress herself, but about my judgment of women in general, and intimated I was quite out of my own proper sphere attempting to contrast womanly qualities and characters, and would do better in handling the bow and rosin.

I finally got somewhat riled myself and said—well I hardly know what I did say—in reply.

It was very mortifying to see so good a fellow, usually so discriminating in judgment and logical in his conclusions, so thoroughly befogged and prejudiced in his view—it can be nothing but prejudice—that he could not see distinctions as clear as day to me and, of course, to all others.

After I went to my room I studied the whole thing out: I am now sure Herbert has fallen in love with Miss Lucille. Ah, well! poor fellow no wonder that he is blind. I really should have been more patient with him. Yes, it is as clear to me as noon day. Herbert cannot see that any woman is more beautiful than Miss Lucille because his sight is dazzled. How true it is that love is blind. Ah, Herbert for thee I'll say the prayer:

"O wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels——."

W——., N. Y., Nov. 7th, 18—.

Herbert and I are better friends than ever. I am, however, quite inclined to avoid giving him any offense by making any more comparisons between the two young women.

I think this is the safer way, and I am equally determined not to discuss with him our quarrel of last night, for while he is quite agreeable and friendly now, I see possibilities of disagreement cropping up. From one remark he made today, I judge that he attributes our quarrel to some unbalancing of my judgment, some infatuation about the heiress which he thinks prevents me from seeing things as they are. Poor Herbert! I pity him.

W——e, N. Y., Nov. 10th, 18—.

How wonderful a thing is dreaming! Ever since a young lad I have had occasional dreams which made a deep and permanent impression on me, and some few of which have been verified by subsequent events, and may therefore be looked upon as significant or prophetic.

Last evening I had a very peculiar—not to say weird—dream which I will try and describe while it is fresh in my memory.

THE DREAM

The first mental state I can recall in connection with the dream was the sensation of falling—if I may use such a term where one does not seem possessed of a physical body. Not that I was bodyless—but the weight, the burden of the earthly body was gone—and while seemingly in possession of some ethereal body, I was falling, rather say gliding down, down, down through an abyss of misty darkness. The movement was not one that occasioned any fright—nor did it seem in any way the result of an accident—but rather a conscious volition, as though there was a latent purpose in the mind either for myself or for some other person, and I was in some way fulfilling a design, or was seeking to help some one.

Down, down, down, but ever and anon I saw a flash amidst the misty clouds and on this murky background I caught pictures instantly displayed and as quickly lost in the all-encircling gloom. The pictures I saw were transcripts from my memory and represented my own past life.

Soon I began to discover with these rapid flashes of views

of my past life other pictures thrown up in lurid relief on the walls of cloud and mist about me—pictures I could not recognize but which I concluded must refer to future experiences of my life yet to be fulfilled. All the scenes were thus connected in some way—some more and some less directly—with myself. Some I remember were pleasant to look upon, but the majority were sad, or at least pleasureless to contemplate. Some few of them seemed painful and tragic, and at a certain point the clouds began rapidly to thicken about me, the mist become a rain of tears, and the sound of a coming tempest reached me. Then I heard a roar as of a vast body of angry waters and soon I was no longer falling or gliding downward, I was breasting the most tremendous billows of a dark and shoreless sea.

At one instant I was riding on the peaks of the billows mountain high and tossed from crest to crest, and the next I was sinking, sinking, sinking until night, and storm, and darkness had swallowed me up.

I noted when on the billowy crests the occasional flashes that lit up the troubled ocean: and I could see in the instant view thus disclosed one mountainous billow chasing another in rapid succession and the dark, deep, yawning chasms that opened between them.

In one of these vision pictures illumined by this mystic light I saw a human form on the crest of the highest billow which seemed familiar. An instant later, as the changing waters brought it closer to me and the flash of light shone upon its face I was certain I could recognize the form and face of Mark Ashton and on his forehead I saw the marks of a bloody wound. Yes, it was his lifeless body tossed piteously from place to place by the giant arms of the angry flood.

Then I heard a cry for help. I could not tell how near or far, or just in what directions, but it pierced my heart with suffering, and my eyes eagerly scanned the abyss of waters whenever the shifting light enabled me to see.

Then riding on the billowy crests I saw a woman's form, tossed mercilessly about by the angry flood, the long jet black hair spread out on the water's surface or thrown upward in play by the exultant floods. Soon again I caught a view of her and this time the form was brought near me, the face as pale as death with exhaustion and terror, a phosphorescent gleam upon every feature and upon her palpitating bosom. It was Helena Ashton, her lustrous eyes filled with terror and her hands uplifted in prayer for help!

Then the storm increased, and like playthings on the giant arms of the maddened flood we were tossed, to and fro, passing and repassing each other, now near together and now far apart, and ever and always looking to find and rescue each other but in vain.

Then all sensation ceased and all consciousness save a tiny flickering little blaze that seemed more like a memory than a

conscious existence of the present. Gradually, however, it seemed the tempest was shorn of its strength, and the horrid roar of the angry floods became quiet. I could see the misty vapors lightening about me and above me, and as I looked up two rays of light, like sunbeams through a cloud filled my vision, grew brighter and brighter, and as consciousness returned again in full measure I thought I was gazing into the wondrous eyes of Helena Ashton.

* * * * * *

Next morning my strength was so exhausted with the excitement of this dream that I gave up my work for the entire day under plea of indisposition.

The pictures were so stamped upon my memory I could paint them did I possess the artist's skill.

I would rather be able to interpret them.

W——e, N. Y., Nov. 12th, 18—.

What an enigma the soul of man is—even to himself! When we have least we are oft freest from care and happiest, and when we have more in possession and more in prospect, and fortune's sun seems to shine directly upon our pathway, we become unaccountably discontented and the life which outwardly seems bright and happy, becomes inwardly sad and disquieted.

I have often thought if there is a future life, as most people profess to believe, and we are permitted to review our past lives, one of the most interesting problems will be to account for our varying moods of joy and sadness, hope and fear, which have come upon us suddenly and without any apparent cause.

I am looking back to my days at "The Willows" when that one family meant all the world to me, when I was unknown, comparatively friendless, and with but little money in my purse. In a few months all is changed, I am not dependent now on any one's bounty, have an ever increasing circle of friends, and my income while small is rapidly advancing, and yet, I believe I was happier there than here. I cannot even imagine any rational explanation.

I am coming into a condition of peculiar sensitiveness. I have always been more or less sensitive to my surround-

ings but notice this is increasing in a marked degree. The sight of a pretty child, a beautiful flower, or a fine picture, or the recital of an heroic act, thrills me as never before. Form, color and motion seem to change my mental and spiritual condition. I do not know how to describe these experiences which are not altogether new and yet are new in their intensity and reality.

Perhaps I may say I am coming into a new soul atmosphere—like a vessel sailing from the polar seas towards the equator and encountering the Gulf Stream and new winds and new tides and a new vibration of earth and air and sea.

At times I seem to be in touch with the world material and also with a world spiritual, and I contrast them in my thoughts and find them so dissimilar in many ways.

When the world of sense seems drear or dead, the inner world of the spirit is oft full of spring and sunshine and flowers. New constellations are rising in its heavens, and its atmosphere is vibrant with song. But sometimes both worlds seem to be under eclipse—and sometimes both worlds seem full of gladness, but I never really enjoy the outer or sense world unless the inner world is properly attuned.

My worldly prospects were never so fair and promising as now. I have an income that fully supports me and enables me to lay by a little every month. I shall soon give up my clerkship—perhaps after the holidays. I ought to be contented and happy but I cannot disguise it from myself that I am not. I am restless both in body and mind and sometimes feel as though I must break loose from restraints and limitations that I can feel but cannot describe. I am seriously thinking of trying my fortune in New York City. At times I feel this restlessness to such a degree that I start out and take long walks and I have gone when these fits were on me over vast strides of country. I walked half way to "The Willows" a few days ago, and found myself late for two pupils on my return. The walks do me good, however, as I sleep better after them.

At times I wonder if I have not mistaken my calling and if I would be happier as well as richer in business.

No, I am sure that the blame is in myself and not in my profession. Music is to me the best interpretation of nature's order, the divinest of all the arts, the noblest of all callings, and the one path following which I can get most good for myself and do most good to my fellowmen.

Perhaps I am passing through some mental or spiritual change, some crisis which means growth and advancement. Perhaps—and who knows—it may be a lurking strain of insanity in my nature, something inherited and hidden from me all the years with such concerted care and cunning of my friends!

I only know there is within me an unaccountable reaching out of my being for something which my nature craves.

To-morrow I shall see Dr. Gregson. Perhaps I am overworking. He should know. Oh, the mystery of life!

At times, too, the mood of writing comes upon me and my thoughts run into verse—I will not say poetry. I have destroyed nearly all of these effusions but as I desire this Diary to be a fair history of my inmost life so far as these pages can reveal it, I shall insert here the verses I wrote yesterday.

LONGING.

I.

Through the rosy dawn of childhood, through the blush of manhood's prime,
Through the earnest life of struggle—with its toil and care replete—
I have waited, still am waiting for the coming of the time
When my ears shall catch the music of the coming of her feet.

II.

I am waiting all the morning hours the coming of her feet,
While the bird his mate is calling in the woodland far away,

While the dewdrops sparkle brightly, and morning daisies
sweet
Lift their faces to the kisses of the mighty King of Day.

III.

Through the crimson flush of sunset, through the deep-
ening shades of night,
Through the long and weary watches which my spirit
must complete,
Still I am waiting, ever waiting, through the darkness
and the light,
For that thrill of joy supernal at the coming of her feet.

IV.

From the region of the unknown, from the land of the
"to be,"
In response to many prayers, my sad, lonely soul to greet,
From the land of dreams she's coming, from across the
mystic sea,
And on the strand my ears shall catch the music of her
feet.

V.

Oh, skies be calm above her! Oh, winds blow straight
to me!
Let fragrant gales and balmy air proclaim a welcome
meet,
While I scan the vast horizon, o'er every league of sea,
And watch and wait, and wait and watch, the coming of
her feet.

VI.

By the dual law of nature, by attraction's bond complete,
By the chain that binds each atom to its pre-determined
mate,
Some day I know I'll listen to the coming of her feet,
I shall see and know and love her, be her coming soon
or late.

VII.

I have seen her airy garments in the trailing clouds of light,
I have watched her face reflected in the light upon the sea,
I have heard her fairy footsteps in the zephyrs of the night,
And her voice I hear in ocean waves a-calling unto me.

VIII.

She is coming! She is coming—for the rose has deeper hue—
And the birds all sing more sweetly in the chorus of the tree—
And the stars all shine more brightly—and the sky is deeper blue—
So I know my love is coming, swiftly coming unto me.

W——e, N. Y., Nov. 15th, 18—.

Dr. Gregson says I am in fine condition physically "Certain natures, however, need change and yours is one of them. Don't over-practice. Take a week's vacation." And he gave me a tonic and he is richer by $5.00.

W——e, N. Y., Nov. 18th, 18—.

Miss Ashton returns here the first of December and leaves for the South the first of January. So say the reports of Parish and others. I called on Miss Lucille last evening and if Miss Helena's course is definitely decided for the winter Lucille evidently does not know it. She reports Miss Ashton as feeling better but not yet fully herself and ready for work again.

Miss Lucille does not know to what point in the South Helena is going in January, but gave me a message from her to the effect that she would give up her violin lessons after December. So I lose my most interesting pupil.

I had a letter from Mrs. Williams to-day. She has fixed on the holiday week for the house party. They

are making extensive preparations—viands, decorations, music, etc., and are to have an old-fashioned dance to close up the festivities. They are inviting over a score from the city.

W——e, Dec. 1st, 18—.

I am still undecided as to my course for the future. I believe in most lives there comes a time for simple "waiting." I have an impression that events will dictate my future for me. I feel assured that changes are coming. I must see other lands and strange faces. At times I have a clear sense of mystery and fear overhanging me, as of some impending calamity. This seems an unwholesome condition mentally, despite Dr. Gregson's statement.

Often I recall some past experience, and, for a time, recall it so imperfectly that the only thing I know about it is that it was pleasant or sad. Sometimes with letters in my hand, I get a sense of anticipated pleasure from one before I open it, and shrinking fear of another, and on opening them find their contents fully warranted my fear or my hope. So while I feel assured the future has much of joy and gladness in it for me, yet I distinctly feel the gloom and apprehension of some sorrow and suffering, as though these coming experiences were already, in a sense, here. I wonder if as Campbell says:

"The sunset of life brings us mystical lore
And coming events cast their shadows before."

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 2nd, 18—.

I resumed Miss Ashton's lessons and find her much improved—but by no means the same bright, wholesome and self-possessed young woman she was when she began her violin work.

Either she has injured her health more seriously than was imagined when she went away, or she has some cause of fear or dread which makes her life far different from that of three months ago.

She got through the lesson fairly well, but it was with

an effort, and there was just enough forgetfulness and self-abstraction at times to prove to me that she was still unfit for the work, or for any severe labor that could be laid aside.

I congratulated her on her improvement, but frankly told her that despite this I could not guarantee much progress in her present condition during the month of December and that if she preferred rest I would waive the formal notice and release her.

"You are dissatisfied with me. I do not blame you," she said. "I will do better next lesson. You shall see improvement. No, I will not give up my lessons this month, even if I do not get all the advantage from them I should for after this month I cannot promise myself any such advantages."

I thanked her for the implied compliment and withdrew.

On passing through the library I met Miss Lucille and found her radiantly happy. Some secret joy was in her heart and eyes as I had seen some secret grief or dread in Miss Helena's—disguise it as she would.

What a world of mystery! The heiress, beautiful as the most perfect flower, rich beyond comparison, the proud leader of a proud circle of admiring friends, soon to wed riches and perhaps love, yet so sad beneath all her forced smiles and laughter that a poor music master could find it in his heart to pity her. And this, too, in the same house,breathing the same atmosphere, where the poor, neglected daughter Lucille, whose only mission in life seems to serve and assist her father and her sister, is overflowing with a joy, the source of which is hidden!

Lucille and her father have, I am told, secrets in common, though what their nature may be no one is able to conjecture.

"Miss Ashton is not so much improved as I had hoped to find her after her trip," I remarked to Miss Lucille.

"She will be much better soon," she remarked, scarcely restraining her lips from a smile.

"She appears to me," I continued, " and I say it to you in confidence, to have some secret cause of grief or dread. I cannot imagine any such cause and do not wish

to intrude in family concerns, but as her teacher I thought I might mention it to her sister."

"She has no real cause of either grief or dread—only an imaginary one—and even that imaginary one will soon be removed," she continued while the joy of her being seemed to pervade the very atmosphere.

"Even imagination can create most intense suffering," I continued, determined, if possible, to impress on Miss Lucille's mind the seriousness of the situation.

"True, Mr. Molson, but we cannot escape all suffering. Would it be well for us if we could? If we elude it on one side of life's pathway it strikes us unexpectedly on the other. If we escape Scylla we are likely to strike Charybdis.

"And then, is not suffering one of our greatest educators? Many of the finest qualities of perfected character are due to its refining and ennobling effects. Suffering purifies. Have you not read how the great Nazarene was 'made perfect through suffering?' Out of the hottest fires the gold comes purified, the dross purged away."

Then, lowering her voice a little, she said: "Helena Ashton is in heart and character pure gold, Mr. Molson, pure gold."

I found no reply, on the spur of the moment, to this very strange statement, but my looks probably expressed my thoughts even better than my faltering speech would have done.

"Pardon me, Mr. Molson," continued Miss Lucille, "as I am in the humor for preaching, if I remind you that the darkest hour precedes the dawn, and that the storms and bitter cold of winter are a part of the necessary preparation for the spring flowers and autumn fruits.

"Miss Helena will be supremely happy, I am sure, when the day of revelation comes. It is coming fast—may it soon reach us all," and as she gave me her hand there was a smile upon her face of such exalted pleasure and delight I carried its influence with me for hours.

* * * *

I spent several hours after coming home trying to

resolve the problem of the sunshine and the shadow, the joy and sorrow, the bright hope and the secret dread, hanging over the lives of the two young women of Ashton Hall—but in vain.

Herbert is of opinion, and he may be right, that Mark Ashton is persuading Miss Helena into some mercenary marriage for promoting his ambitious schemes or his whims of an alliance with the aristocracy of the old lands, and that Miss Lucille is either keeping some pleasant feature of the proposal in reserve, or hopes to reverse the plans of the Banker and give her sister her freedom. Something beneath the surface is being planned and carrid on in Ashton Hall and from all appearances the heiress is to be the victim. If Mark Ashton is bartering the heart and happiness of Helena Ashton for pride or gold, or his own world ambition, I could murder him for his cruelty.

W——e, Dec. 4th, 18—.

John Eben Williams and Mrs. Williams and daughters spent a couple of hours at Ashton Hall last evening and Herbert and I were invited in to share their company. Mr. Williams and Mark Ashton seem tried and trusty friends, and I am convinced of one thing since seeing them together; either I am utterly mistaken in the principles of 'Squire' Williams after living under his roof 17 years, or Mr. Williams is ignorant of the methods pursued towards the farmers by Mark Ashton's financial agents. The Mark Ashton of the drawing room, however, as I have pointed out in these pages before, is quite a different character from Mark Ashton, the money lender.

It was very gratifying for me to witness the reverence and homage which all present, and none more than the young ladies, paid to Mrs. Williams who was mother, friend and counsellor to me, all in one, in my early and most lonely days. The young women sat at her knee and plied her with questions and the group made a pretty picture upon which I did not tire gazing. Mrs. Williams, whose dark hair is getting frosted with the winter

of age and whose face is to me the model Madonna of all the ages, and whose eyes have the calm of heaven in them, sat there as queen in her regal chair of instruction with youth and beauty at her feet listening and treasuring the choice words that fell from her lips.

I cannot attempt to record the multitude of queries proposed—all of which seemed to have a practical bearing on the youthful lives before her—nor the answers given. But one question asked in a half wisper by Miss Helena, while the company were responding to some sally of wit from Herbert, did not wholly escape my ear and when once Mrs. Williams got fairly started on the theme, she had few more attentive listeners than myself, although I had heard the same sentiments from her lips before. I was interested now in seeing how her somewhat novel views would be accepted by the young women. The matter related to a point which evidently had been discussed warmly by Miss Helena and Miss Lucille and Mrs. Williams was asked as arbiter to decide between the views of the fair disputants.

I judge from what I caught of the question and Mrs. Williams' answer that the relation of love to marriage might be called the point at issue—whether mutual affection is the basis of true marriage, or whether reason and worldly considerations should decide and the affections be taught and trained to become subservient to reason and personal interest. It seemed that Helena had championed the latter view of the case. Now I cannot pretend to anything like full and accurate synopsis of what Mrs. Williams said but the following represents fairly the gist of it:—

"Many of the current aphorisms and proverbs from past days express our most advanced scientific knowledge of today and the deepest practical wisdom. Coming events cast their shadows before is one of these, expressing the great truth that the events of man's life exist and manifest first in the world of truth and spirit, afterward in the world of matter; and that sensitive souls become cognizant of coming events by sensing conditions which produce them, thus furnishing a rational founda-

tion and explanation of prophecy. True marriages are made in heaven is another of the sayings of the past disclosing hidden wisdom. For all true marriage is based on adaptation or agreement—not implying similiarity—but a fitness to help and serve each other. Such souls in nature's order are drawn toward each other, and where they meet and understand themselves and nature's ordination, wise and happy marriage is the result. This attraction is along physical and mental lines but mostly on the spiritual side of their being. It is at once nature's preparation, nature's ordination and nature's benediction on the marriage rite.

"As truly as rivers seek the sea, as birds by instinct find their home, as truly as planets draw each other, so truly do souls need and seek each other. Call it attraction, affinity, love—or what you may—it is nature's law and heaven's command—and so true marriages are in this sense made in heaven.

"This natural fitness of two souls to help and serve and develop each other is often annulled by personal interests, subservience to social customs, manners, worship, or overcome by mere physical attractions, or abitrarily interfered with by others than the ones so deeply concerned. All such marriages are of earth, earthy. Love is, therefore, when properly understood, the basis of true marriage.

"But it must be love expressing the higher affinity of mind, and spirit. Without this, the true marriage does not exist, for a priestly benediction cannot unite hearts which repel and do not attract each other, any more than some pious mummery could make harmony out of two discordant notes of music, or combine oil and water in chemical union. Such marriages may be legal, and fashionable and highly respectable, but, from the standpoint of nature's laws and adaptations, they must be regarded as a degradation of the marriage bond.

"Nature's law in regard to marriage is that souls that need each other, each possessing a power to aid and serve the higher interest of the other, should be joined in matrimony. These are they whom God hath joined to-

gether. And this ordination of nature ignores all questions of wealth, and caste and rank, and recognizes adaptation to each other's need through true mutual affection, for love is the natural attraction of two souls that need each other.

"Love—how abused and misunderstood the term! How profanely men speak of it, bandying it about on lips of deceit and falsehood, yet love is the one word which is expressive of God. Love—how pure, divine, ennobling when understood in all its intensity and beauty of meaning! Love is another name for God, the force which binds the universe together, that makes the world go round. Love binds all souls with golden girdle to the throne of God. Love unites families, communities, brotherhoods. Love is an enchanter that changes all worthless things to gold. Love is the artist that discovers and produces the beautiful. Love lights the eye, transfigures the face, exalts the life and changes the cottage to the palace, poverty to affluence and makes a desert a paradise. A loveless marriage is a sin against one's own soul, an outrage on nature's plan and purpose for humanity, a crime against innocent childhood.

"But love is not passion. It is not selfishness. It is not mere emotion. It is not a passing storm of feeling, an avalanche of waters, followed by a drouth. It implies a fixed principle of conduct, a mission to be fulfilled, a devotion to a high and holy purpose. Love, then, implies service, sacrifice, disinterested toil for the person loved. It asks no reward. It looks to but one end—the welfare of the one loved. See yon mother sitting beside the crib of a sick child, day after day, night after night, forgetting all worldly engagements and pleasure, forgetting her own need, her whole soul centered on the sick child. So love in its higher forms of expression gives all and asks nothing in return. Love says: let the one I love be successful and happy, I ask no more; I can even be abased if that one is exalted.

"Such marriages and such love would make of earth an Eden and in a few generations almost transform men into Gods."

"Ah, me!" cried Miss Helena, rising up from her seat, "the path is too narrow, the road too steep for my poor, faltering feet, such a life as you have described is only for the good, the saints and holy ones of earth, souls freed from the dross of sinfulness, selfishness, pride and worldliness. I shall, I fear, never reach your ideals. I am too proud—and selfish—and—useless."

"Do you know, Miss Helena," continued Mrs. Williams, "one of the greatest dangers in life is underestimating our own greatness and our own goodness, strange as this may sound to those accepting traditional religious teaching. We are far too apt to condemn ourselves, and lose patience with ourselves! We seem to forget that character is not formed in a day, the virtues and graces of humanity are not grown in a night, but as the plants require good conditions and then time to utilize these good conditions, so we also cannot put on all strength and wisdom and goodness as we don our garments.

"Why are we so impatient with ourselves? You have patience with the flowers—give them water and soil and sunshine and patiently wait for growth and bud and flower. You are never impatient with them nor chide them. Do you think the soul grows into virtue and beauty and spirituality more easily and more quickly than the plants come to bloom?

"I am sure if you saw a poor little plant in the dusty highway trying to grow and express its vision of beauty to the world, you would pity it—would you not? Well, we are each like that poor plant by the wayside; let us pity each other, and let us pity ourselves."

Then turning to Miss Helena, she embraced and kissed her and said, " And my beautiful Helena, who judges herself so severely and grows so impatient over her own failure and short-comings, will yet possess every grace and beauty of character I have described."

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 5th, 19—.—

Herbert is quite a philosopher in his way and has given me an idea of his views of human nature that I

think would prove novel to most people. He believes that at the base of their character all men are essentially good and essentially great. The expression of this goodness, in individual lives varies according to age, experience, environment and heredity. The amount of goodness, in individual lives, varies according to age, exprogress to which nature has carried out her evolutionary process in the individual.

All man's powers of mind, body and soul are essentially good in themselves and their proper use is good, and only evil in their abuse. Men are not wicked by nature but good, and by fuller development can become better. What we complain of in human nature and in human conduct is not sinful and wickedness per se, but in reality a condition of unripeness, if that word is allowable. Good and evil are relative terms, he says, and one man is good compared with another not so well developed and the same man is bad compared with another man more developed, just as a peach half ripe is good compared with a peach just forming, and bad compared with a ripened peach. He is an inveterate optimist like his mother, and believes all things tend upward and onward and, like her, often quotes Tennyson's phrase about the "one eternal purpose" nature manifests to develop and educate and ennoble man.

According to this view there does not appear to be very much difference in men morally, or intellectually. In their essential being they are much the same, the difference being in the environment and the degree of their unfoldment.

This view strikes me as very interesting and if it be correct, may humble the pride of the few but ought to be a powerful stimulus and incentive to the many. To bring out the best that is in one's self or one's friend, he says, you must supply right conditions and wait nature's evolutionary process. This must seem slow to many but it is certain in the end. "The mills of the gods grind slowly," and "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." Now Herb says one of the most essential requisites in getting out into

full expression the talent and goodness and beauty inherent in ourselves or others, is to believe in it and expect it, just as you believe in your rose tree and give it the soil and water and sunshine necessary, and then patiently wait for bud and flower.

Now all this has somehow set me thinking about Helena Ashton and her troubles, and I have been wondering if I have not done her much injustice by my sharp criticisms of her at first. I certainly have seen of late qualities in her life I did not at first dream she possessed, courage and self-sacrifice in the rescue of the child she loved, and many evidences that while she carries herself proudly and haughtily before the world, she has both a very lively view of her imperfections and a very strong desire for growth and improvement. Possibly there are many other attractive qualities in her nature awaiting the opportunity, that is the fitting conditions for unfoldment, just as the bulbs lying hidden beneath snow are waiting for the genial air and warmth of the spring. There are certainly grand possibilities in her life.

When I thought over these things tonight and remembered that she, like myself, was an orphan, but, unlike myself, had not such a teacher as Mrs. Williams to instruct her and had derived her views of life from a fashionable governess and from life in schools for women, where wealth and fashion ruled, and I remembered her recent sufferings and secret troubles, a great wave of sympathy and pity passed over me. I saw her again in mental vision as I had seen at my last lesson, her pallid cheeks in the setting of her wonderful wealth of black hair and lustrous eyes, and her timid and troubled manner, and I resolved to have another conference with Miss Lucille and see if the "day of revelation"—whatever that may mean—cannot be hastened.

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 7th, 18—.

I saw Mrs. Williams and Laura in town today; they were anticipating a jolly time during holiday week and are going to invite the Ashtons. It seems that the Will-

iams family and the Ashtons got quite well acquainted while I was in Leipsic, through business relations I undertand between the Banker and Mr. Williams.

My work goes on evenly and prosperously but there is little heart in it. I cannot arouse a spark of enthusiasm in myself over counting cash, reckoning interest and making entries. And as for professional work in a small city, you soon reach the limits of the place and then there is no possibility of advancement. I sometimes wish I had chosen another place.

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 8th, 18—.

I gave Miss Ashton her lesson today and she did better than formerly, seemed more like herself, and I should be quite encouraged if she were going on with her work for a length of time. But of what use? It seems farcical to attempt anything in three or four weeks, and hypocritical in making any pretense at serious interest in the few remaining lessons. They only seem like a protracted farewell or leave-taking. I am persuaded she must feel the same thing and the lessons must prove as irksome to her as they do to me. I shall break off my engagements with her the next lesson under some excuse. I am beginning to wish I had never begun them. I think I have too much work—yes, that's it, I need her lesson hour for private practice.

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 10th, 18—.

I have given my last lesson at Ashton Hall. At the close I told Miss Ashton I had too much work and as there were but a few weeks remaining of my engagement, it was useless for either of us to assume an interest in the work we could not feel under the circumstances and so begged her to release me.

She at once bowed assent but I could see she felt in some way humiliated and, after a moment, she said:

"Confess, Mr. Molson, you have formed a bad opinion of the people of Ashton Hall in general. Of Papa

Ashton and his business methods, his cruelty to the poor, his lack of charity, his treatment of his daughters, and of his selfish and frivolous daughter and her lack of interest not only in music but in all things good and noble ———."

I had tried to stop her half-jocular and half-serious charges—but in vain. She seemed determined to say what was in her mind and she did it, quite fearlessly, almost impetuously.

When I got a chance to speak I said, "You quite misinterpreted my views of the people at Ashton Hall. I have no right nor wish to criticise or condemn my employer or his family. We have, it is true, different ideals but I certainly cannot condemn others in choosing and following their ideals as I choose and follow my own."

She dropped the supject at once and went on to say: "You have been very attentive and painstaking. I have certainly learned much and should have received greater advantage from your lessons but for my neglect and ill health. I thank you much for the interest you have shown."

Going to the parlor she returned with a beautiful medallion of Beethoven which she asked me to accept as a token of her gratitude. "It may remind you to think as kindly as you can of the people of Ashton Hall when the experiences of the last three months are only a memory to you." She was very pale and calm but spoke with averted face till she gave me her hand in parting and as I caught the full erpression of her countenance there flashed across me a revelation—I love her!

It set my whole nature thrilling with unexpressible delight. It fills my mind and heart with a rapture all divine.

Yes, I love her and that one fact explains to me all that has been mysterious in myself and my experiences the past few months. I know now that from the first hour I saw her face, her divine beauty was stamped upon my heart forever. It has taken all these months for the knowledge of this simple fact to reach my mind in the revelation, swift as the flash of light, that came to me

in the full glance of her eyes tonight. I love her, and while I could not be more certain of the fact, I am alas! equally certain that an impassable gulf separates me from her forever—that I must bear my burden alone—I must, like some wounded bird, seek the solitude and suffer the arrow rankling in my heart, as many another has doubtless suffered. Yet despite the utter hopelessness of my love, the thorny path my feet must thread alone, the years of vain regret I see before me for what might have been' (had fortune been more kind), despite all present torture and all future pain, it is an unspeakable luxury to confess it to myself and to write it in these pages, "I love her, I love her, I love her."

This passion seems to glorify and inspire my nature —hopeless though that passion be. It sets the finer part of my being vibrating with a melody all its own. It is to my nature what the sunrise is to the Alpine peaks, cold and bare and unattractive till glorified by the god of day.

I know love is a fire that consumes, a mountain torrent that oft brings destruction in its wake, a madness that oft o'erthrows reason and life itself. I know, too, that after the first ecstasy of this revelation has passed from me, and I see before me the inevitable separation, the long years of patient, plodding labor, with the dream of life unrealized, what suffering is in store for me thro' this mad passion, yet despite it all, I repeat I am glad and thankful I can write that to me the gates of Paradise have opened in vision, though but for an hour, and though I may not myself enter.

W——e, Dec. 12th, 18—.

I have told Herbert that I love Helena Ashton. His face looked very grave. I thought he seemed to view it in the light of a great calamity. At least I judged that from his face, for he would say but little.

Bless him! He has been a thousand brothers to me in one. Ever since I remembered, in all my boyish troubles and griefs I have gone to him as naturally as to his

mother—just as a child goes to the great all-sympathizing mother-heart. In his ordinary life he's a jolly companion and a good friend, but it is only in trouble that you realize his true nature. When you go to him in trouble he has that rare faculty of putting himself in your place, seeing things, feeling them and suffering them all as you do. You don't need to be everlastingly explaining things to him. He comprehends you and your trouble is his trouble. He opens his great sympathetic heart and swallows you and your sorrows in it. He is like his mother, divine in his sympathies. He is like those blessed beings who say to troubled hearts, "Come unto me, ye wearied and heavy laden, ye sick and suffering and I will give you rest and peace." Such people heal your mental anguish and heart wounds, and sickness and soul lonliness by their looks, their tones, their very presence, rather than by any conscious efforts. They impart to you the calm and comfort of their own being. They are the world's Christs.

Herb heard me very patiently and only said, "I am sorry, Herman, for you—possibly for her. Wait till I have thought it out and I'll tell you then what to do."

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 13th, 18—.

I could see a great seriousness and gentleness in Herb when he came in tonight. A mother with a sick child could not have been more tender. I thought he might scold me—and felt as though he ought to—but he had not a word of reproach.

"Now, Herman, I am going to prove myself a true friend. Good friends and good surgeons often give pain. If you were not what you are, so sensitive to conditions and if there were not so much of the emotional and the imaginative in your being, as there is, I should not prescribe what I am going to. The trouble is these things strike deep in natures like yours and remain long. But first answer a few questions. You love Helena Ashton—does she return your affection?"

"I have not the slightest possible reason, unfortunately, for thinking so," I replied.

"Fortunately—not unfortunately—you should have said," replied Herbert, "for you must know that did she love you and were she willing to marry you, you could never ask her to do so, much less marry her. You could not seek her hand under present conditions, the heiress as she is of vast wealth, and you could not ask her to renounce her wealth to marry you in poverty, and if these insuperable obstacles were out of the way, Mark Ashton remains. I need not repeat these facts. Your own good sense and judgment recognizes them as fully as I do. Hence it is very fortunate if you alone are involved and the case is much easier of adjustment. Does she know that your are in love with her? You have not spoken of it or even hinted it to her?"

"Never, and fortunately she even thinks I dislike or despise her and prefer the sister," I said .

"I am sincerely glad you have not spoken," Herb said, "but I am not so well pleased with your last statement that she believes you dislike or despise her and prefer her sister. As an expert in heart cases" Herb continued with a gleam of his old humor, "decidedly dislike that symptom. A woman's nature is a most singular mechanism and has so many hidden springs and sources of action in it that many unexpected things take place. We can only hope for the best, that is, that she hates you. When did you discover that you were in love with her?"

"Only three nights since on leaving her in bidding her good-bye. It came as a revelation to me—in a glance of her beautiful face. I have been most stupid not to recognize it so long ago. I knew at the first her beauty enthralled me, I began admiring her as you do a picture, or any other work of art and genius. I compared her with others and pronounced her in many ways deficient, in many ways blameworthy. Then I saw some good in her character and some indications of forthcoming graces and virtues, and I began to hope for her. I found her sick and in trouble and I pitied her—and all the while

her face was before my mental vision and her image stamped on my heart, yet I knew not that I loved her till I said good-bye to her the other night. Now my whole being is intoxicated with her beauty. Her name is full of music. Her presence, though unseen, seems ever with me and even the thought of her gives me unspeakable gladness."

"Herman, my boy," said Herbert, " there is one way out—only one. It pains me to say it. It cuts me to the heart but I see no other way. Pack up your things. Go away a year or two. You cannot stay here and face the issue. You need a change. I have seen something serious was on your mind for months but did not dream of this. Brace up and show yourself every inch a man. Of course, you will never let her know it. You, I am sure know it would be folly, madness, to ask her hand. If she loves you she would be too proud to own it. I do not say you are not worthy of her or of the best woman that God has made, but Herbert, you could not honorably follow the prompting of your heart——."

"I know, I know, Herb," I broke in upon his discourse, "there are a thousand reasons why I could not and would not voice this fact to another living soul, but you or your blessed mother. My poverty, my mysterious parentage, my father's injunctions, the letters of my unknown friend, and above all the clear though tacit understanding with Mark Ashton that I entered Ashton Hall as a hireling teacher, and by implication barred from all approaches to social equality, and the Banker's well-understood policy regarding his millions and his heiress —all—all forbid the thought of any reality to my dream.

"Herbert, I want your continued good opinion. I need your strong sense and steady hand as my friend and brother just now. So I tell you—that since I first discovered the truth myself that evening in Ashton Hall up to now, through the sleepless hours of the past nights, I have had no other thought in my mind but that I would bury this madness from the world and from her. God help me, I will."

Herbert grasped my hand and said, "You have all elements in your nature out of which heroes are made" and I saw the tears glistening in his friendly eyes.

We talked till long past midnight and this is our agreement. As soon as I can close up with my private work, without giving too much occasion for surprise and gossip, say by the end of the year, I shall go to Germany for a year's study and rest. When I come back I will start professional life in real earnest in New York City.

Herb, splendid fellow that he is, has put his purse at my disposal and offers me $1000 or more as I may need it. We are thoroughly agreed in our plans and intend keeping them sacredly to ourselves, at least for the present.

Herbert has mapped out my program for me with regard to Miss Ashton. I am not to seek her nor to openly shun her, but to avoid any occasion of private interview. Meantime I am to keep as busy as possible.

I should have been stranded in this heavy storm but for Herbert.

W——e, Dec. 19th, 18—.

I have given most of my pupils a guarded notice that unless my health improves I may go away for a time in January and as to the bank engagement I prefer to forfeit my December salary in lieu of a month's notice rather than excite comment and inspire questioning on the part of the Banker or his family. I can easily find a plea for sudden leave-taking in January. We are not going to let the Williams family know about it until we meet them at the house party. I am succeeding well in my preparations and shall be ready to start January first or second, at latest.

What an immense relief it is at such a time as this to have engagements for every hour of the day and evening and not to be obliged to think. If I allowed myself to think of the Williams people, and of her, I should have to give up. As it is, I am on the rush day and evening and sink into sleep through sheer exhaustion.

What a comfort to have a true comrade like Herbert, "guide, philosopher and friend" to stand by one's side in a battle and cheer one on.

If I win in this fight Herbert deserves the credit. His mother's beautiful teachings are incarnated in him.

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 21st, 18—.

While I was out Herb got two cards of invitation for us to Miss Ashton's musicale this evening. He had sent a reply declining because of previous engagement. I am finding my time so fully occupied and so much yet to be done in preparation that I shall only go out to the house party one evening—the night of the old folks dance. I shall take Christmas dinner with them, however, and Herb of course will go along. I am afraid I shall not enjoy it, in view of what is coming.

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 26th, 18—.

We spent Christmas at the dear old home and I never saw "The Willows" look more attractive and never, it seems to me did the people appear so truly loveable. I did my best to fight off the shadow of our coming separation but could not but recall my former sad leave-taking for Leipsic.

Mr. Williams was full of interesting accounts of his farms and stocks and many plans for improvement in the future. I listened in vain for the accounts of foreclosure. Perhaps Mark Ashton never carried out his threats. Perhaps, if he did attempt it and "Squire" Williams took a hand in it, the latter is too ashamed to mention it. A great contrast between him and the Banker who seemed then to glory in his proposed oppression.

Mrs. Williams is the same—only each year seems to add to her subtle grace, increased depth and wisdom to her thought and richness to her emotional life.

I saw her curious gaze fixed on me several times but I preferred not to let her know that I saw it, and kept up a rattling fire of conversation. Herb proved himself

a host, too, in filling in the time and keeping the attention off some dangerous themes, yet I do not doubt that Mrs. Williams knows there is some secret between us and something we are hiding from the family.

She can, as I know, keep her secrets from me for many years. It will go hard with me, if I do not keep one from her for a few weeks.

Laura and Maude grow more beautiful and interesting daily.

This home is now my strong attraction to this country.

I have promised a violin solo for the house party and I am sorry, for it will be an ordeal to play on that last night.

But how could I refuse the Williams family anything? *How?*

Dec. 28th, 18—.

The Williamses had a glorious night for the old folks concert and dance. And everybody—except Herb and I—were in such rollicking good humor! How I could have enjoyed it a few months ago—or even now, if the dark shadows of separation were not at this hour falling between me and all that is dear to me on earth.

Just before the evening program opened two spanking teams drove up to "The Willows"—the first bringing Mark Ashton and Helena and the second Herbert and Miss Lucille. I had gone out early in the afternoon by stage. They were cordially welcomed and entered into the spirit of the proceedings with great zest and delight. There is something in the bracing air of winter and the joyous sleigh ride to rouse the sluggish pulse and put new vim and spirit into both body and soul.

I never saw Mark Ashton so radiantly happy as he was that evening. It was not the sudden flush of glory which I have seen on his expressive face a few times, which like the lightning comes and disappears almost the same instant. No, it was a look of deep, all-pervading soul satisfaction and pleasant anticipation combined that illumined his face the entire night. He looked younger

by twenty years than I have seen him look at times, and seemed to have thrown off for once all those business cares which I have seen debase and mar his countenance occasionally, and unalloyed pleasure sat there enthroned. Mr. Ashton was particularly delighted with the choir, dressed to represent the old-time people, singing quaintly yet sweetly and tunefully the old-time songs. He cheered them enthusiastically and again and again pleaded for repetitions of certain numbers. The dance also greatly pleased him and he and Mrs. Williams led in several of these to the great satisfaction of the young people. He was also one of the leaders of the conversation, which never flagged between the numbers, and told many an amusing story of his early life. Squire Williams, also, inspired by Mr. Ashton's example, related funny incidents of his boyhood days.

Nearly one hundred people in all were present, the entire house being thrown open, brilliantly lighted, and most of the rooms adorned with palms or flowers while several choice works of sculpture and painting graced the large drawing room, which was utilized for a ballroom. The gathering, while large for a country home, was a very genial one, every guest seemed determined to be happy and to impart happiness to others and the company, therefore, was more like a family reunion than an ordinary social gathering.

Miss Lucille is for some cause still provokingly happy and in speech and manner added much to the life and enjoyment of the evening. Miss Helena also seemed to catch the exuberant spirit of the place and time, but I noted that occasionally she seemed to sink back into the troubled look and dejected air that have marked her manner for the past two months. While at times she took a leading part in the wit and raillery of the hour with something of her old-time gayety, there was several times a look of pain and apprehension in her eyes when the New Year was mentioned. She avoided me, I thought, in all the evening's exercises and conversation, except, of course, the formal greetings. Perhaps she thought me rudely discourteous in dropping her lessons on a palpable excuse, or in failing to accept a social invi-

tation to Ashton Hall. Turning suddenly once during the evening, I caught her brilliant eyes fastened on me with such a strange expression in them—a sort of inquisite wonder in them—but changing as she dropped her gaze to such a look of pain that it made my heart ache and I turned away.

I was urged by Mrs. Williams, and urged again by Laura and Maude to dance, but I lied and said I was suffering with headache. I don't justify but despise myself for it—and I am glad I am ashamed of it—but I could not dance, knowing what I did, and realizing what this gathering meant to me. I can lie with the lips, a quick impulsive lie, and inwardly repent and disavow it, as I did. But I could not act a lie to music. Had I attempted to dance it would have been one protracted lie through all the poetry and witchery of its mazes, and I felt if I danced when my heart was like lead in my bosom and I could hardly keep back the sob from my lips. I should be playing the hypocrite with every movement of my body, and making a discord in the otherwise harmoniously happy circle, which the angels could hear and my own soul must condemn. I could no more have danced that evening in that room than I could have danced beside the tomb of a friend. I was spending, probably, my last hour, for years at least, under the roof that sheltered my boyhood, in the bosom of a family that had given unstinted care and kindness to an orphan stranger. And I was fighting, therefore, a battle with my emotional nature, which is always difficult to repress. The strange thought struck me more than once, as I kept a lively interchange of light conversation with my neighbors and showed myself outwardly affable and courteous to all, that I was seeking with the mask of happiness upon my face and amidst the evening's revelry, to bury the voiceless hope of my sad heart in that wilderness of flowers and to the sound of mirth and dancing. Worse still, I had seen in the look upon her face that she was suffering, though from far different cause, and on that face a mute appeal, which I could not interpret nor could I altogether ignore.

So, at last, I found the place unbearable and stole

away upstairs and sought out my own little room and the bed in which I had slept as a boy. Kneeling down before it with my face in my hands, where I had often poured out my heart in prayer in my childhood troubles, I sought wisdom and strength and grace to do right and follow out the straight path I had marked out for my feet. How long I was here I know not, for I lose track of time in certain moments of deep self-absorption and I was under the load of a great sorrow at that hour and the path of life seemed so very steep and rough and almost impossible, when I suddenly heard a whisper, "Herman!" which seemed to come from a small square opening in the partition separating my room from a similar one belonging to Herbert. Then after an instant's silence again I heard it, but more audible, in low yet distinct though tremulous tones:

"Herman, my poor, lonely boy, Herman be of good cheer. You are not alone. You will be guided and sustained. Be brave and true for you are passing the days of trial—but they are nearing the end—just——a——few——more heavy——shadows—and then——the light. And—then——" but the voice died away to silence.

I sprang up and in a moment was in the hall-way. The door of Herbert's room was slightly ajar. Though the rooms were not lighted, I could readily see as I opened his door that there was no one there. I saw no one, but I thought I heard a door softly opening or closing in the hall below. I knew that Mrs. Williams had spoken to me in the same mysterious way she did before I left for Leipsic nearly six years ago, though Mrs. Williams I am sure did not know I was soon to leave for Leipsic again.

Like all things earthly the proceedings came at last to an end about midnight, but an unlooked for denouement came. It was the Banker of Ashton Hall that sprang upon us the surprise of the evening. In thanking Mrs. Williams profusely for the rich enjoyment of the evening, he wished to know if Mrs. Williams would allow him to obtrude still further on her kind hospitality and grant him a cot for the night. If there were many

guests to remain, as he presumed there might be, he would gladly take a cot in the hall as he was a sound sleeper and had so enjoyed the evening he was loath to leave "The Willows." Then, he continued, he and Squire Williams had some accounts to adjust in the morning and he would, unless he was taxing their hospitality overmuch, remain. Miss Ashton had to return to meet some morning engagements and he was going to ask Mr. Molson to drive his daughter home———.

I lost the rest of his speech—my brain was in a whirl at this surprising request. I saw a look of blank wonder come over Miss Ashton's face and Herbert looked aghast while I—hesitated a moment and then (weak fool that I was for so imprudent a speech)—"doubted if I could manage the team." I was never more disgusted with myself than then, for every one knew I delighted in a fine horse and had prided myself for years on my riding and driving. I rallied myself, however, and thanked him for the honor, "provided the young lady concerned offered no objections."

It was the only awkward or disagreeable occurrence of the evening and I was solely to blame for it, but the circumstances furnished a partial excuse. I saw looks of enquiry flashed from eye to eye between the Banker and his daughters, and Helena approached and whispered something to him and I, standing nearby, heard him say, in low tone: "Very well,——if not—I will go." Herbert came to my aid at once. He put the best face possible upon the matter and entered into a lively talk about the delightful ride before us, even proposing to race to town.

Miss Lucille caught him at once with the retort, "What a compliment to me!" and Herbert for once had no ready reply.

We were soon off and what a glorious night! The road for the most part follows the meandering river which winds along its course like a serpent with its emerald ribbon of ice; a slight crust on the snow and a million sparkling, glittering crystals catch and reflect the moonlight; a foaming pair of steeds seize the bits with a will and show their pedigree and training in every grace-

ful step and movement; a star-decked canopy, the face of God above you and the glorious moon smiling through fleecy, transparent clouds and looking down in full-faced vision to madden the human brain; an atmosphere filled with the elixir of life, vibrant with hope and cheer, radiant with moonlight and starlight and fit for the gods to breathe; and beside you, for a solitary ride of twelve miles, one, an incarnation of youth, beauty and hope, a look of whose face could photograph itself upon your heart forever, and in the depth of whose dark eyes most men would read their fate; a beauty, moreover in trouble, in penitent mood, pleading by word and look for your friendship, and possibly accessible to your love!

Oh, ye Gods! was ever poor mortal so tempted to forsake the thorny path of principle and honor for the rosy path of pleasure's dalliance? Here on the one hand the magic and mystery of the night and the woman beside me who had enthralled mind and soul with her beauty, and now, in her sorrow and trouble, stirred profoundly the depths of my emotions, and on the other side the teachings of my childhood days, the ideals of right and honor I had formed, the engagements made with Mark Ashton, the spectral teachings of my departed father—all—all standing as a wall of stony separation and freezing the words upon my lips!

My heart was a battlefield of the most conflicting emotions during that ninety minute ride to the city.

It was as though everything conspired to urge me to avow my love and risk my fortune on a single throw. The enexpected request that brought us together, the inspiration of the scene and ride and moonlight, the crisp air intoxicating one's blood, the merry bells starting the finer vibrations of the brain, the silent enchantment of earth and sky and the magic of beauty by my side, the thought that this was the last night I should see her for years, and possibly, forever! May the Recording Angel be merciful to all who are tempted as I was to forget honor and duty!

Nor was Miss Ashton's talk on the way home without its dangers and temptations.

She had in her present condition of health grown

over-critical of herself and somewhat morbidly sensitive to the fact that the Banker and his daughter shared secrets which were not entrusted to her. She had pleaded, as I learned, for confidence and all explanations had been postponed. And lastly, she seemed to have conceived the idea that I, her teacher, criticised and condemned her and had treated her with silent disdain. The awkward circumstances in connection with my hesitation to accede to the Banker's proposal about bringing her home had evidently deepened this latter impression.

"You are angry with me, Mr. Molson. I do not say unjustly, but you owe it to me to tell me why."

I assured her I was not and had only the kindest wishes for her happiness and welfare.

"Then why did you break off my lessons on a ridiculous flimsy excuse?" she asked. "You did not wish to drive home with me to-night, and you showed it before a dozen of my friends, most plainly! You were a genial friend up to a few weeks ago. Then suddenly you changed, and at the close of the lessons, seized your hat and gloves and fled as though fearful of my presence. Since then you avoid me, and to-night wounded my pride in public. Had I acted properly I should have declined to force my company upon you, but I obeyed father's counsel hoping you would tell me how I had offended you.

"I know you do not like my life and I know it is a frivolous and unworthy one, but I must be even worse than I suspect to deserve such open and repeated slight and discourtesy."

She spoke calmly, yet with a measure of quiet feeling, as one would to a friend in gentle reproach.

"I cannot explain, Miss Ashton," I said in some trepidation. "You know we often act without reason. I did want to come and for one reason I did not want to come. I hope you will not urge me to say why. Believe me, without explanation, it was consistent with the highest respect for you. I would do all in my power to add to your happiness. I am sorry, but you misunderstood me," and with this lame conclusion I had to stop for I really knew not what to say.

When she replied, which was after some moments of silence, she spoke slowly and sadly, and with a patient sort of resignation that touched me deeply.

"I am beginning to think I cannot understand any one," she said. "I feel doubtful if any one understands me. All of my life of late seems full of mystery and unexplainable and unaccountable things. My father, great and good man that he is, is full of enigmas in words and manners and action and I puzzle my poor brain over them in vain. Lucille, the best and most loving woman I know, is unable or unwilling to explain many strange things in our lives at Ashton Hall—at least not now, but hopes to explain them some day. My own nature puzzles me. I am losing interest in many things that delighted me and find myself so thoroughly dissatisfied with myself and my own surroundings, that life is losing much of its enjoyment. I am realizing that life ought to be much more than I have made of it and how little I have learned, and how little I have done, and I seem like one in the dark groping to find the light. Then you, like the rest of those connected with the house or bank, you, my teacher and friend, for such you were a short time ago, become capricious and refuse to teach me, and in unnumbered ways in the last two months have shown your disdain, and tonight in presence of my friends said, said as plainly as actions could say anything, "I wish I could decently get out of driving Miss Ashton to W——e." And all this you and others ask me to take as a matter of course and without explanations! Put yourself in my place, Mr. Molson. You are sensitive as I am (and we are both orphans, adopted and reared through the kindness of our friends—did you ever think of that?). Be my good friend and explain. I do not say I am worthy the confidence of Papa Ashton and Lucille and yourself but I try to be——"

There was just a suggestion of difficulty in speaking. I looked at her and on her long, dark eye-lashes I saw tear drops trembling.

How I wanted at that moment to explain my conduct, declare my love and to beseech her pity and compassion as she seemed to appeal for mine.

"I cannot explain, I cannot explain to you my unworthy conduct of tonight, much as I regret it. Forgive it and forget it."

"Then I know that you condemn me and you think me either unworthy of an explanation or incapable of understanding you."

"Neither the one nor the other," I cried, "I have too many faults myself to condemn others. Mrs. Williams taught me——"

"Oh, if I had had such an instructor as Mrs. Williams, such an example, such an inspiration I might have developed a nobler character too. I had to imbibe my ideals in life from salaried governesses and my rules of conduct from the inmates of fashionable schools for women. If I do not measure up to the highest standard, perhaps I should rather be pitied than condemned."

I was silent before this arraignment, but at length I mustered courage to ask her to accept my word that what had influenced my conduct was fully consistent with the highest respect for herself and admiration of her character and with my best and most cordial good wishes.

"I accept your statement as you give it, but I must ever believe your conduct most unjust to me, though not intentionally so, notwithstanding good wishes and good intentions."

She gave me her hand and the matter was dropped so far as conversation was concerned.

Then I started in on student life at Leipsic, discoursed on German teachers and students, contrasting the ideals and methods in music there with those in America, till we reached Ashton Hall. I think she must have seen I desired not only to close up the former topic of conversation but also all matters that related to either of us personally. She listened with patient attention and I presume grew more puzzled than ever over my motive and purpose.

As I handed her out she stood for a moment on the door step in the mellow moonlight, looked up at the moon riding in majesty in the heavens and said, as if

soliloquizing,' 'I wonder if we live after this life is over and if we will know ourselves and our friends any better there than we do now!"

I was silent, my lips refusing to obey my will. I sat taking into my eyes and heart the beautiful picture she made as she gazed upward—a picture I shall carry with me through life. I wondered too, if the future life had its temptations as she had wondered if it had its enigmas, for us.

"You are leaving the city soon, I hear," she said, to my great surprise.

"Yes," I stammered, "next week I go to Germany again."

"Will you call again at Ashton Hall?" she said.

"I fear not, I am extremely busy."

"Then this is good-bye?"

"I fear it must be, Miss Ashton, under all the circumstances."

"We part good friends," said she, "but you have made me think I must be very wicked and have pained me much but you have taught me many things for which I thank you. Good bye!"

She turned a parting glance upon me as she entered, just a glance, and the light of life for me seemed to go out with the closing of that door.

Herbert was waiting for me in our sitting room and as I walked in he came and grasped my hand and looked into my eyes as I stood there weak and trembling with the mental strain of that hour's ride upon me, and looked his questions into my eyes.

"I have not spoken," I said, "I never told her but I love her more than ever. I have fought the great battle of my life," and I told him the story.

He listened attentively and then putting his arms about me said, "Herman, my lad, you did nobly. The worst is over."

W——e, N. Y., Dec. 31st, 1906.

Alas! Alas! for human resolutions. I have fallen, miserably, shamefully fallen from the lofty principles

I had chosen to follow. I am like some bruised and mangled Alpine traveller looking up from the valley in his pitiful suffering to the lofty but narrow path by which he hoped to reach the summit. I have fallen and the sharp rock of remorse has pierced my side and my heart and hope seem dead within me.

All the fight of the past few weeks in vain! All Herbert's praises unmerited, my own self-respect laid low—all by a hopeless and mad avowal of love which should have been known and recognized by me at the first and crushed out of my heart and life in its beginning! I have broken faith with Mark Ashton. I have spurned the counsel of my own father and the disinterested advice of my 'Unknown Friend'—and all for what? To win my own humiliation and lose my own honor, in a mad avowal of my hopeless infatuation for Helena.

But I will be just, even to myself, as nearly as my fevered brain can recall and my trembling hand can record it. I will set down what has occurred, fairly and fully, on this eventful day.

God is my witness that I meant to adhere to my resolve and that in the moments of that madness that came upon me in Ashton Hall today, I forgot for the time, every injunction and counsel that had reached me from my father and my friend. forgot even that Mark Ashton lived, forget for a time that there was a being in the universe to whom I owed devotion or duty. but one. I thought, too. that the fight was over and the temptation passed, and I was sure of victory over my mad delusion, till—but I will not anticipate.

I had my things all packed for the journey when I remembered a little volume of choice poems Mrs. Williams had given me as a birth-day present and which Miss Lucille had borrowed and not returned. It was so dear to me I resolved to call and ask her for it, and on doing so learned that Miss Lucille was out. but not till the maid had in her zeal announced my request for the book to Miss Ashton, and a moment after Helena came in with it in her hand. She was still very pale and

had a painful expression about the eyes which I was sorry to note. She greeted me very quietly saying:

"I did not anticipate the pleasure of seeing you again or, shall I say the pain of parting with you again?"

"But why should you say pain of parting?" I asked. "You have so many, many acquaintances and such a multitude of friends, one can scarcely be missed."

"We have many acquaintances but few real friends in life, so few we miss one true friend, and I believe you are such, though your actions at times have seemed decidedly unfriendly."

"I am proud to know I have been numbered among your good friends even if my conduct has annoyed or pained you at times and I cannot give a satisfactory explanation. Friends must sometimes trust each other and ignore explanations that would be necessary between strangers. I hardly think, however, I deserve so high an honor as the term of friend."

"I am going to be frank and candid with you now," she said, "since I have this unexpected privilege, especially since I reproached myself for silence before"—and after a brief pause, but with little effort she went on. "There can surely be no wrong and nothing indelicate in my telling you how much you have helped me, in many ways. We part today and I may not have again an opportunity of being just to you and acknowledging a debt of gratitude I owe you, even if at times you have seemed unjust or even cruel. I hardly know how to say it, but in many ways your life in the past few months has influenced mine and I think for good. It was not your words alone—for we have never had much speech together, though the new views of life and duty I have heard you give from Mrs. Williams' teachings have set me thinking deeply of myself and what life means, and how I could make the most and best of it. It was—pardon me if I seem personal—rather yourself. I found you cared not for the things I prized most in life. You scorned the mere show and glitter and fashion and folly of a world in which I gloried as the child delights in glittering toys. At first you annoyed and piqued my pride. I saw you were so different from

the people I was accustomed to meet. You lived in another world of thought, and purpose and emotion. You did not flatter; your speech was plain and simple and without fashionable lies; your life seemed full of purpose and of good endeavor. You loved truth and sincerity and honor and these principles of conduct would not bend to custom and self-interest; you were interested in other people, the poor and friendless and were willing to defend them; you were not afraid even of the great Banker and could tell him to his face your convictions of his wrong-doings.

"Do you think that when as your pupil I was permitted to hear such views and see such principles exemplified in your life—so novel and so interesting, I could be uninfluenced by them?"

"Do you wonder, Mr. Molson, that your life became, all unconsciously to you no doubt, a mirror in which I saw the emptiness and utterly unsatisfactory character of my own?

"Do you wonder if a revolution of my thought and a transformation of my inner self has been going on in my nature?

"Can you wonder that I am dissatisfied with my past and my present life and hoped, yes ardently longed, for better things?

"And so, owing so much to you I had to either follow the lines of fashionable reticence laid down for young ladies in speaking to a gentleman, or overcome my shrinking sensitiveness and satisfy my sense of truth and justice by telling you how much, how very much, I owe to your words—and to yourself!"

She paused and for the first time looked me in the face, her countenance, her lustrous eyes beaming with a new light and her voice vibrant with emotion.

What could I say? I could not have spoken for the world. I was astonished, bewildered, delighted and overwhelmed with this dawning of a nobler life in the girl I loved, with this spiritual beauty that was budding for its coming bloom in her character and with the sweet pentence of her confession and the boldness of her avowal.

Yet, notwithstanding all this frank, and doubtless sincere, confession on her part there was a pain, bitter as death at my heart. I knew full well despite all her words of praise, flattering as they were, there was not in all of these avowals the scintilla of a hope on Miss Ashton's part that we should ever meet again. It was our parting and she knew it and she could well afford plain speech. It was the fact of parting that made this kind of language a possibility.

It was because there was no hope for me, because in all this awakening of her higher life there was self-knowledge, self-pity, penitence and a dawning spirituality and a sense of shame over misspent opportunities, but no tenderer thought, that she dared to speak so plainly, so justly, so boldly. She sat in silence a moment and went on:

"You have done so much for me, I thought you might do more, even if you did despise me and the life I led. I was hungry to learn more of those things which came to you through Mrs. Williams's lips, and so I prized the lessons for opportunity I might have of learning from you something more about the nobler ways of living, and of catching that inspiration one earnest soul can give to all with whom it comes in contact.

"I wanted to tell you all these things and express my thanks—one feels so much nobler when you acknowledge a just debt of gratitude, as I did once to you on Chestnut Island, do you remember?—but you gave me no opportunity on our return the other night from "The Willows."

"I wanted you to know that your life had blessed my own and then I wanted to earn your respect and conquer your contempt for me. But these past few months have been full of keenest suffering to me. I have been waking up to this revelation of life's meaning and to a bitter sense of how I have been misusing my grand opportunities, and have grown so sick of my past life and the little world of fashion and of folly in which I live, and so discouraged at times with myself, yet all this time I have been urged on and on and on in the whirl-

pool of society and have felt that I never needed so many friends—and I never seemed to have so few"—there was a sob in the liquid notes and I saw her eyes were moist with tears—"never so few! Lucille is of late all mystery and mirth. Will not listen to my sorrows. She sees an end of all in a few days. And Mr. Ashton, a noble and misunderstood man, is mad, raving mad on an idea. So I looked about for help and sympathy and thought as you were my teacher—kind and good heretofore— you would help me, show me the path, the better way of life, and help me get a little of the heavenly harmony of true happiness and joy into my poor sad life"—she turned away with a look of suffering on her face—"and then, you, somehow, turned against me, dropped me as your pupil, and roughly shook me off——"

"Oh, Miss Ashton," I cried, "God knows I did not mean——"

"No matter, no matter now. I have been just and told you all I owe to you. Some day I may be worthier of esteem and friendship. It may encourage you, when far away and in the coming years to know your life could reach and help regenerate a life so cold and useless as my own has been. Try and not despise me but think of me as trying to be good and to do good. Perhaps, if you knew all my life, and all I have and all I am to suffer, and what efforts I have made, a nature as kind and generous as yours, in place of cold contempt would give—me—pity." and turning she held out her hand with averted face and said, "Farewell, Mr. Molson."

Then it was—as I took her hand and gazed into her lovely face and tear-bedimmed eyes—it seemed as though a tide of burning emotion poured over my being. My frame shook with the surging flood of feeling. My voice could only articulate:

"Pity you? Pity you? Helena Ashton, God knows I need your pity more."

She turned quickly and scanned my face with wonder as she asked:

"You need my pity more—and why?"

Then it was I forgot my lonely past, my poverty, my honor, my principles of lofty manhood. All, all were swallowed up in mighty wave of passion that poured itself over me till I remembered naught, thought of naught, and realized only that the woman I loved, fair as a vision of heavenly beauty, yet in sorrow and tears, stood before me, and I must declare my love, and seizing her two hands I gazed into her eyes and said:

"I shall tell you why you should pity me. Because I love you. I love you. I love you, madly and hopelessly. I love you, Helena Ashton."

She gave a little cry of astonishment and affright and turned her face away.

"I have loved you since I first saw you," I went on, "though I knew it not till it came as a revelation flashed in an instant upon mind and heart, one night on leaving you. Heaven knows I have suffered and I thought to spare you the annoyance and me the pain and despair of this hour.

"I knew I could not hope, but your sorrow, your loneliness, your sweet penitence, your gratitude for what you thought I had done for you, and your appeal for sympathy and help overcame me. I must, I will tell you how madly I worship you. Your face, your eyes, your name, your presence is ever before me night and day. ****** I could not endure this and be near you, day by day, in teaching you. I was going away—fleeing from you as from a fire that would consume me. I was going that I might not be tempted to ask your love—and I fought so hard—so hard—the last few weeks for I knew I ought not to speak—and I thought I had won—I was not to look upon your face again—I was sure I had conquered my passion, and I knew it was hopeless to speak——."

I turned to look upon her face—it was pale as the face of the dead, and she was trembling and sinking as I led her to the sofa and sat beside her.

Then I watched the color come to her cheek and a light into her eyes and she spoke in low, sweet voice and said: "I shall always be glad and thankful I have known you—always grateful. There is no hope—yet

I shall always be glad you have spoken. Now we can pity and pray for each other. Leave me, Herman, leave me."

I saw the agony upon her face, the mute appeal in her eyes. I stopped and kissed her, and my grief found voice in a little cry of anguish, when the door of the parlor opened and Mark Ashton stood before us.

Then the full enormity of my folly and madness in a flash passed before me. He walked to the center of the room and ignoring my presence, in mild voice but firm, hard countenance asked:

"And has Mr. Molson done you the great honor, my daughter, to propose to marry you?"

I saw her trembling, whether from fear of the Banker, or from the greatness of the crime I had committed from Mark Ashton's point of view, or from some other emotion I could not say.

Both of us were silent. I stood petrified by the first clear view of the situation as seen by the Banker. Then he continued:

"Will either of you be good enough to answer—Oh, pardon me. I am intruding. I had no thought the drawing room was occupied until I opened the library door and became an unwilling listener. Then I thought it was my duty to enquire what was disturbing my daughter's peace and happiness." Then turning to me in politest, yet most exasperating tones, he asked cooly:

"Do I understand you made an offer of your hand and fortune, Mr. Molson?"

The cool politeness of the man, the quiet, cutting sarcasm under which he veiled his words of condemnation, the half-formed smile about his lips, as though he enjoyed my pain and double discomfiture, overwhelmed and maddened me.

"I hope sir," I answered hotly, "it is not a crime to love Helena Ashton. I love her" and I said it proudly "as a man can love but one woman in all the world and I told her of my love and I glory in it."

"You seem to have forgotten the very definite understanding between us as gentlemen, when you were

admitted as teacher to my home," said he in measured and severe tone.

"I did not forget it—till this hour—I fought my passion manfully till today—then calling to see Miss Lucille I met her—unexpectedly met her—and found her in sorrow and trouble. I was overcome by her beauty, intoxicated by her charms, sympathized with her trouble and melted by her tears, and my restraint gave way. My emotions rose up as a flood and swept away reason, honor, fidelity I——."

"Then you confess, I understand that you violated the trust I reposed in you, have proved unworthy——"

Helena sprang from the sofa with a cry, "Oh, it was all my fault. I did not dream that Mr. Molson loved me. I thought he despised and condemned me. He called for his book from Lucille and I detained him—I tempted him unknowingly. I was so sad, so discouraged with myself. I told him how his words and his life had helped me to better thought and living. His principles of honor and fidelity——"

"Oh yes," cried the Banker raising his voice in irony, as he pointed his finger at me, while the old evil look of avarice swept over his hard face "his principles of honor and fidelity, his affection, his love. How much had Mark Ashton's gold to do with his affections? Bah! A young man of honor who knows the meaning of the word duty and what is due between man and man would not seek under pretense of accident to captivate an heiress and capture a fortune!"

I sprang to seize him by the arm, but Helena was before me and stood facing the Banker with such a look as I had never seen upon her face before, a look beneath which he, strong man that he is, quailed and turned away his eyes. She spoke slowly:

"Utter one word more aspersing the character of Herman Molson and I, sir, leave Ashton Hall never to set foot in it again." Then threw herself exhausted on the sofa. He was turning again to leave when I seized him by the shoulders.

"Sir," I said, swinging the strong man round to face me "not another word will I listen to here. Your

charges are false as if a demon had framed them—as infamous as if conceived in hell. In another way and in another place, I will refute them before I leave this place forever."

Then I saw his face aglow with strange light, and knew that it must be violent passion which excited it on this occasion. I released my hold upon him and he wished me a courtly good night and was gone.

She lay upon the sofa, her bosom heaving with the violent emotions of the scene but with such a light still shining in her tear-dimmed eyes as I had never seen there before.

"Helena," I said, "forgive me the great sorrow I have brought to you."

"You have much more to forgive," she answered. "That is all we can do—forgive and try to forget."

I stooped and kissed her forehead and uttered a word of farewell love.

She looked up at me as I turned away but her trembling lips uttered no word of farewell.

As I passed from the room I heard Mark Ashton in strangely quiet tones calling, "Helena, my child, let me speak to you one word, dear."

The wintry sun was setting in a halo of glory as I passed noiselesly out of Ashton Hall.

Mine had gone down already in darkness and the mists of tears.

I have just completed this entry—have been writing almost steadily since I came home from Ashton Hall.

My whole nature is profoundly stirred.

Mark Ashton's bitter words have set every nerve tingling with indignation. I long to tell him to his face what I could not in her presence. He will soon be in his office. I shall go direct and face him there. I will not justify myself—I cannot—but he shall know the truth—I will hurl his false words back at him and I shall tell the money-mad Banker of the crimes he has committed. Yes, "crimes" is none too strong a word. He has coined money out of the hearts of the suffering poor. He spares not even those he loves in fulfilling his mad ambitions. He gambles daily to win wealth and

and a high place among the rich and the aristocratic and the hearts of men and women are his pawns. He is consigning to a living death the woman I love. He is mad—a human monster—and the world were better off if he were dead.

W——e, 9:15 P. M. Dec. 31st, 19—.

I will set down the record now while I can recall every word, every look, every tone of his voice, in my memorable interview with Mark Ashton tonight.

He received me with a cool politeness, an icy courtesy, that forbade all expectations of a pleasant interview and wanted to know to what he was indebted for "the honor of this call."

"Mr. Ashton," I said, "after my interview with your daughter today and after my words to you some explanations and an apology are due you. I regret my words, however, justifiable they seemed at the time. I am convinced that no matter what the provocation I should never have addressed you as I did—and in your daughter's presence."

Still he sat in perfect silence immovable as a statue.

"I beg you to believe me. I swear to you I had no more thought of avowing my love for Helena Ashton before the moment the words broke from my lips than I had of taking my own life. I was hiding the secret of my heart most zealously. I did not seek but shunned her. I was arranging—Herbert Williams will tell you—to leave W——e in a day or two for good. My sole offense and one for which I grieve tonight is that when I found myself under such strong temptation and my emotion mastered me I did not leave her. But she, presuming I was offended with her and despised her, sought to justify herself in part as she valued my esteem and thought my words and life had helped her—not dreaming I loved the very earth she trod, the flowers she touched—and that her name, her voice, her face were worshipped by me every hour.

"I should have left her but, God in Heaven! when she told me how I had helped her and sought to remove

my severe judgment and disdain and I saw her face and tear-dimmed eyes, and heard her voice break as she told of her life's trouble and heart-ache—Heaven help me! I could not restrain my speech. My words leaped unbidden from my lips and I forgot she was the heiress of Ashton Hall and I a homeless orphan. Mark Ashton," said I, looking now in the face which had grown suddenly pallid and pain-stricken "Mark Ashton, I would go through the agony of the past few months again, I would go through the floods and fire to enjoy again the luxury, hopeless though it may be—of looking into her face once more and telling her my love!"

I saw his face change expression several times—a twitching of the muscles, and his averted look told me something had profoundedly moved the Banker—and I stepped forward and laid my hand upon his shoulder and said:

"Mark Ashton, did you ever love a woman as I love Helena? Speak, for if you did, you cannot condemn me!"

I thought he was sinking in a faint—he ceased breathing and then gasped as though something were choking him or he was suffocating—then rose and asked me to excuse him for a moment and rushed up the steps and across to his library. He was gone for five minutes as I noted by the little clock upon a mantel shelf. When he returned he was himself again—cool, polite and unapproachable as ever.

Mr. Molson would pardon his abruptness in leaving him. He was subject—though he hoped it would never be mentioned—to slight attacks of heart trouble and had been, perhaps, overworking. He was now fully restored and would be glad to hear further what Mr. Molson had to say.

"I have made ample apology for my words to you. It is now time to hear what excuse or apology you can make for your cruelly false statements and insinuations. You spoke as though I sought your filthy gold. Know you that I despise your millions. They could not tempt me—all the women of the world—even beautiful Helena—could not induce me to touch a farthing of

the money you have got by extortions and oppression of the poor.

"If Helena Ashton were not cursed with wealth I would seek her hand through fire or flood—and—I believe she would marry me——"

"Marry you!" broke out Mark Ashton in a low cynical laugh, "Marry you, with a score of eligible suitors at her feet and scions of aristocracy from the old world seeking her hand! Pray what claim have you upon her hand and fortune?"

I was angry. I stood erect before him and said proudly:

"Mark Ashton, I well know the world's opinion of wealth and position and I despise it. Strip away these extraneous matters—the chance of birth and sport of fortune—and let Helena Ashton's mind and heart decide and I, poor and unknown and homeless, will enter the lists with all her suitors and win her for myself. In manhood I will take no second place with sons of wealth or scions of nobility. Of course I have never entertained a hope. I know your mad ambitions, your miserly avarice and that you would crush her heart if she loved a poor man rather than forego them."

He had for an instant a queer expression on his face. If I had seen him at another time or under other circumstances I should have said it was a look of pleasure—but it faded instantly and the old hard look came back—as he cried out:

"Oh, fie! Mr. Molson do you for one moment imagine Helena Ashton could care for you—save as a casual friend—or that if she did and if she loved you madly as you profess to love her, do you think she would ever dream of marrying you? Miss Ashton is a girl of too much intelligence, she has been too well trained in social ethics, and knows too well what belongs to birth and position to pay undue attention to what you call love. She knows too well that in her high social rank what society expects, what the world at large expects, and that I expect her to make a suitable choice of life companion. She will never marry one not fully her equal.

"I fear you flattered yourself that because she took a gracious interest in you as her teacher she might, under other circumstances, regard you as her equal. You evidently place a high valuation on yourself. I presume you have no thought of further addressing her?"

"No sir," I said quietly "I never had a hope from the beginning. I have none now. I shall never broach the subject again to her."

"It is well. You forgot yourself, forgot your engagement with me and disappointed me in your conduct. I hope you will live up to honor and principle hereafter."

"And you, Mark Ashton," I added in reply, "remember if through your insane ambition, your lust of power and wealth. you make shipwreck of her fair life and happiness, I and others will hold you responsible. She is a slave of wealth and circumstances, a prisoner in a palace, and you are her captor and jailer. I believe you are crushing her heart and hope by your ambition. Beware—you will reap what you have sown. Let this warning haunt you day and night till the hour of your death, Mark Ashton" and I was gone.

It was exactly nine o'clock by the mantel clock as I walked out of Mark Ashton's private office.

Surely there must be a judgment day, or some avenging Nemesis for those who murder the souls of men, if those who murder human bodies are worthy of punishment.

P. S. As I walked away from the office up the steps to the main hall I heard the swishing of a dress as in the lower hall and an agitated quick footstep. Shortly after I heard a door open and close as though some one were escaping.

P. S. When I reached the outer door and was turning away, Helena Ashton's pale face peered into the main hall from the parlor door for an instant and was gone.

It is all over. I have awaked from a feverish dream, in which there were some sweet visions, to life's cold, stern, bitter reality.

I told Herbert my story—the story of my downfall —my interviews with the Banker and my penitent hopelessness. He said not a word in condemnation. I could

see his eyes moisten in sympathy and I knew he feels the coming separation. Oh, in all the world there are only two it seems to me, who can enter into my grief and sympathize, Herbert and his blessed mother.

Herb knows I fought a good fight—until today. My packing is about finished. All going well, I am off tomorrow evening. This will be my last entry in W——e.

* * * * *

——Oh, horror of horrors! Herb has just come and told us. Mark Ashton is shot—dying in the very office where I left him a short time ago—a bullet wound in his right temple—sitting at his table. Oh, God! My brain is on fire—Who could have done it? Not the watchman—not Parish who is out of town—could sudden madness have seized——Oh, no, no, no.

Herb has been down to see him. He was shot while sitting at his desk. They found him with his head resting on his arm—breathing heavily. They have car—— Herbert wanted me to go down. Oh no, no—it would kill me.

I feel a choking sensation.——My brain throbs—and my nerves are tracks for the hot feet of pain—Oh, that I was a thousand miles from this accursed W———e.

If I could escape from life itself but the dread of something after death. ——Oh, loving mother in heaven! If I could but escape to your arms! Herb forbids my going to "The Willows,"—he says it would be madness till the preliminary examination is over—Some will think I have murdered the Banker. My God! the cup is more than I can bear! Yes, I must stay—but every moment is freighted with agony—every nerve of my body seems quivering under the lash of pain.

"The Willows," Jan. 9th, 18——.

Have been here nearly a week and very sick. Nursed back to life by Mrs. Williams and her two daughters. Heaven alone can repay them. I seem like one awakened from a frightful nightmare—the dreadful strain and excitement of that last day of the year—the

bitter interview just before his murder—the alternate hope and fear of those dreadful days—all, all come back to me again, after the fever and unconsciousness, and I feel again those sharp tremors of the nerves and quivering sensations of pain in my head, but not so distinctly as I did. I suffer less because I now dream a great deal—even sitting in this arm chair I can close my eyes and my early days come back more distinctly than ever before. I have been back to the early days here with Herbert and Laura and Maude as children. We have been romping again over the lawn—chasing butterflies, gathering flowers, picking apples and playing our childish games. Back, back and still farther the book of memory has unrolled, and now while I sit here with eyes fast closed a white mist gathers in the far corner of the room and out of that mist, which first thickens and then opens out, I see again —Oh, so plainly—the calm sweet face of "Aunty May" and the other face propped up among the pillows long, long ago. I see that face that was half hidden in the pillows as I saw it in my childhood, the same yet not the same. Now it has such a glow of health and youthful loveliness and, Oh, the light in those eyes, the light of my mother's love. I know it is she—and with her many others—others—many others.

Herb has just come to my room to announce two strangers from town to see me. I know who they are—police. I feel it in my heart—they have come to torment me with more questions—perhaps to take me prisoner. God knows. Oh, that I could die and escape this torture. Mother in Heaven pity me, pity me! I must—hide—this**————

(Mr. Molson's Journal is very indistinct and much blurred here. J. G. H.)

SICKNESS AND DEATH OF MARK ASHTON.

John Gibson Hume.

In resuming the narrative, I may inform the kind reader I have no intention of attempting to give in detail the various stages of Mark Ashton's illness ending in his death and burial.

Such details have always been abhorrent to my mind and the love of them I consider a morbid affection of human nature. Useful they may be to physicians and nurses but to people in health I consider them both unnecessary and naturally revolting.

Not that there are not abundant data at hand—in the bulletins issued almost daily by the attendant physicians, some of whom were ever in attendance, and in the summaries of his condition and symptoms as they appeared in the W——e press. The opinions of eminent specialists who were consulted and interviewed on this absorbing topic were from time to time given to the public.

One word will suffice to express his general condition during nearly three months that he lay hovering between life and death: sinking.

He was a man of iron constitution, indomitable will and had strong attachments to this life.

I hold the view—and so does my minister and my wife also agrees with it—that a man who loves life and has work yet unfinished which he is anxious to do and is greatly attached by affection to his fellow mortals, has a greater hold on life and is more apt to survive in a crisis than people who would just as soon die as live. I've met other people who rather seemed to want to go—had things all packed up—and thought that death was very dilatory and neglectful in waiting upon them.

The other kind, like Mark Ashton, seem like some plants hard to pull up. If the reader has ever done any transplanting he will know just what I mean. Some

plants get such a slight hold on the soil you can pull them up, with little effort: others seem to grip the soil in all directions and when they do come up you have to break their roots or pull up a lot of soil with them. Mark Ashton did not want to die just when he was shot —he had plans maturing, interests of various nature that were reaching a climax, and he fought hard and long before he finally succumbed.

I believe teachers of the New Psychology as it is called agree with me in these views.

Of course everybody at the first believed he must die. But when some zealous reporter went to New York and consulted specialists in wounds of the brain and fortified the views obtained there by the opinions of our own physicians, they were able to make out a good case for possible recovery.

My neighbor is a New Thought teacher and he said this reported deserved a medal. He had done the people a great favor in relieving the public mind from fear, and had by this report contributed powerfully to Mark Ashton's possible recovery! I asked him how and he said: the thoughts of people in general, especially of his friends, would have a powerful influence on Mark Ashton and possibly be the determining factor in turning the balance between life and death. He begged me to see that this report got into the hands of the daughters at Ashton Hall and of his physicians. The report stated on authority of these specialists and was supported by statement of standard books in the library of the Surgeon General's Hospital in Washington, that balls in the brain sometimes become encysted and the patient not only survived the wound, but the functions of mind and body become as perfect after as before the injury.

Professor May of Washington was quoted as authority for the following case: A young man of 18 was wounded by an ounce ball which entered the upper back portion of the skull, making an entrance through which the index finger could be inserted. The ball entered the brain and was lost. The location of the ball could not be traced yet there was complete and rapid recovery.

Dr. Wm. Lloyd of Misouri reported the case of a

lady of 18 who had experiences very similar, yet recovered and became the mother of several children. The ball in this latter case was a small one and entered the left temporal bone and was lost in the brain.

Reports also said balls had been known to pass through the brain from temple to temple without serious injury.

All through the month of January the patient remained seemingly unconscious save on two occasions when he might or might not have regained partial consciousness for a brief period. Some faint words escaped his lips which could not be framed into perfect sentences but seemed to imply a desire to speak with Lucille and Helena.

Early in February the mind grew clearer but his weakness was such the physicians feared the excitement of any attempted interview or even the sight of his daughters, to both of whom he was deeply attached, might prove fatal. It was quite evident he was conscious at times, as the light of intelligence was in his eyes and he responded to some questions by pressure of the hand. So the weary weeks rolled on, and whether from weakness or partial paralysis his lips framed no complete sentence after the fatal bullet reached the brain.

Early in March the physicians found his mind apparently more clear than since his sickness began. The eyes were particularly expressive of thought and his responses to questions were very prompt and intelligent for a time.

From this peculiar conversation they learned by questions and responsive signs that the Banker wished to see young Molson. He did not know, nor dare they inform him that Molson had been accused of attempted murder and imprisoned and had mysteriously escaped. Every effort was made to soothe his mind and keep it thoroughly calm and unruffled, so the physicians while promising young Molson should come, took special pains to divert his thought to other channels, and to see that he shortly afterwards forgot the subject in sleep.

A few days after while one physician whom the

Banker seemed to favor was out and the other sitting beside him, he looked about anxiously several times and when it was learned he wished the presence of the other doctor, he was speedily sent for.

On his coming in the Banker expressed both joy and gratitude and he made an effort to speak. His words were so indistinct and low that by bending down over him the doctor caught but two clearly—"Will" and "Herman"

It was pathetic they said to witness his grief over his failure to make known his wishes. There came over his face and particularly to his eyes a look of such deep and hopeless sorrow that the physicians both turned away and wept.

As the month began to wear away to its close, although there were occasional relapses into unconsciousness, the periods of clear mentality were more frequent and continued longer, but there was at the same time no possibility of disguising the fact that his control of the bodily organs and his powers of expression were diminishing from day to day. He lay often for hours with scarce any appearances of life save in his eyes and flickering breath. On the twenty-third about sunset the physicians found him rapidly sinking and for over half an hour there seemed to be no life save that the glass held over his face showed faint signs of moisture. He rallied from this, however, but had another sinking spell in the morning which lasted longer. In the afternoon he seemed resting quietly until almost sunset when he sank rapidly and after careful examination the two physicians pronounced life extinct.

The services were fixed for the afternoon of the twenty-sixth in the library and drawing rooms—the Reverend Dr. Sutherland, Unitarian minister of this town, officiating.

Neither of the daughters felt able to attend the services—all arrangements being made by the Ashcrofts, their neighbors and the funeral director, save that Helena chose the minister to officiate. When consulted she said "Papa Ashton was not a member of any of the churches: he did not subscribe to any of the creeds: but the

Unitarian Church I know was the one with which he was most closely in sympathy. Let Dr. Sutherland, then, be asked to officiate." It is not my purpose to offer any comment on this selection, much as I regretted it.

The services were very brief but exceedingly beautiful and impressive. A quartette sang three selections. Dr. Sutherland offered a fervent invocation for wisdom and strength for the living and spoke briefly on the new views of death. He spoke very tenderly and sympathetically of the daughters and the eyes of his auditors were moistened with the tears of sympathy.

The Chamber of Commerce and the City Council attended in a body and great respect was paid to the Banker's memory by all the professions, as well as the general public.

Death levels all distinctions and generally quiets, for a time, at least, the aspersions of envy and malice as well as the repetition of idle gossip. "The good that men do lives after them; the evil is often interred with their bones." Probably the public who had fiercely denounced Mark Ashton a few months ago thought of that statement, for there was no resentment, only quiet and respectful solemnity on the faces of the hundreds that lined the thoroughfares as his body was carried to Mt. Hope Cemetery, two miles from the city limits.

STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT ASHTON HALL.

John Gibson Hume.

The tragic shooting of the Banker which reached its culmination in his death and burial, and the sudden and mysterious disappearance of the junior clerk, was followed in due time by occurrences about Ashton Hall that first excited mere comment and curious interest on the part of the public, rapidly deepening, however, into something approaching awe and dread.

The young clerk had disappeared almost as mysteriously as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up—the sole trace of him or of his clothing being the scarf and cap, known to have been among his possessions, found on the edge of the ice below the Wienowsky Falls, the bridge spanning them being called Wienowsky bridge.

Affairs at the Bank which were suspended for a time, gradually assumed a normal condition under Mr. Parish's direction, save that the volume of business was of course largely diminished and many of Mark Ashton's personal friends were no longer regular depositors and callers at the Bank. The large number who personally prized the Banker for his geniality, wit and wisdom and his business ability, now mourned him as a great man gone to an untimely end.

But on Ashton Hall it seemed as though perpetual night and gloom had settled. The doors of this once hospitable mansion were no longer open, even to the favored ones who were formerly invited guests or to the wider circle of acquaintances who would gladly have tendered their sympathy. The doors were locked, the shutters fastened and the public were given kindly but firmly to understand that the inmates wished to be alone with their sorrow. The large Hall seemed surrounded by a sombre spirit of desolation and loneliness. Passing the house frequently as I did in the day and evening, I

could but note the air of perpetual grief and sadness about the place.

On enquiry I learned that none but a few chosen friends—the Ashcrofts and the Gibsons—were admitted. The heiress herself, it was said, was seriously ill and Miss Lucille who a few months before had been the bright and happy personification of joy was slowly but surely sinking under the terrible blow.

The shock of the father's murder, then the long strain of anxious waiting during his critical illness ending in his death and burial, proved too much for her affectionate nature and she seemed likely to succumb. His death, despite his long illness, came as a cruel blow upon the sensitive nature of the younger daughter, and came, too, so soon after life's happiness and hope seemed so nearly full to the brim, that it was feared for a time that brain fever would result and perhaps destroy her reason and life itself.

As shown in the preliminary investigation the week preceeding the murder had been to both the Banker and Miss Lucille one of the happiest and of the highest hopes. They both seemed to be on the point of grasping the cup of happiness and enjoying it in fullest measure when, like a sudden eclipse at noon-day, the awful tragedy occurred. It must have been to Miss Lucille like falling from some lofty Alpine peak, glorified by sunshine and brilliant prospect, suddenly into the depths of Cimmerian darkness.

Whatever had been her hopes and secret aspirations, shared by the Banker and herself, death had doubtless put the seal of perpetual silence on her lips. In her lonely chamber she could only see the dismal present or the gloomier future, gloomier by the remembrance of what might have been.

The large parlors received no guests and no longer re-echoed with music and laughter as of yore. The gates were growing rusty on their iron hinges and hundreds of the youth and beauty of W——e were coming to think of Ashton Hall as a pleasant memory of a dead past.

The sisters went out but little and seemed for some

cause to shun all society. With the exception of the two families I have mentioned, the daughters of Ashton Hall had apparently forgotten the rest of the world. They did go out one afternoon, as I had good reason to know, but it was not to call socially but to make enquiries of the Chief of Police and of Thomas Jaffery. I was summoned by Captain Sloane to be present in his office and make careful stenographic notes of the conversation. It is needless to say my presence was not made known to the young women who had an appointment with the Chief. I presume he proceeded on the theory that as the murderer of Mark Ashton was still at large and the case still under investigation, he was bound by his duty to possess himself of every item of information and every statement that could throw the slightest ray of light upon the tragedy, and that some possible clue might be dropped, wittingly or unwittingly, by either of the young ladies, that would serve a useful purpose in the future investigation..... It will also be noted that the young ladies in their testimony in the preliminary investigation showed some discrepancies in their statements, some nervous agitation and some evident unwillingness to declare all they knew. These facts were quite sufficient in the Chief's mind to warrant a suspicion that they might be guilty of an attempt to screen some one they believed innocent who might be thrown under suspicion. I saw the young ladies and took full notes of their speech but the young ladies did not observe me.

They reached the Chief's office about dusk, coming in a closed vehicle from Ashton Hall. They were both closely veiled, but on entering Miss Lucille quickly removed her veil and entered at once on the business of her errand.

"Are we alone, Captain?" she asked nervously. "We wish our interview to be in the strictest confidence."

"See for yourselves" said Captain Sloane, throwing open the two doors, "and be assured I will only be too happy to serve your interests in any way I can."

"We are in great trouble, Captain Sloane, not only

from the awful tragedy of father's death but because of a great wrong done to one who we hope is still living."

The Captain waited patiently until Miss Lucille had recovered from her emotion and regained her voice.

"Captain Sloane, a great and perhaps irreparable wrong has been done to Herman Molson."—I saw the Captain perceptibly change color at that name.—"and I, in part at least, am guilty of that great wrong. I cannot rest, I cannot sleep. I feel as though I could not live unless I can in some way undo that great wrong.

"I am a helpless girl, prostrated with grief. You are a strong man and can do much and I believe you want to do right and will help me. So I've come to you. I want you to pity us and help us." Here she became so agitated that Miss Helena rushed to her aid, put her arms about her and soothed her until she regained her composure.

"My dear lady," said the Captain and I knew from his voice his heart was touched, "how can I help you? My poor services are entirely yours to command."

"I want nothing in all the world so much as to find Herman Molson—if he is living—as I do hope and pray he is. I wronged him cruelly, greatly wronged him by my silence when I should have spoken. I put him to shame and disgrace and blighted the life of one of the best men living.

"I did not realize it at the time—Heaven knows I did not intend it—I did everything for the best so far as I knew. I kept hoping for my father's recovery, hoping, hoping on, till the awful hour came. Then it was too late. We had secrets, my father and I, harmless secrets that did not concern the world and I felt I must not utter them while father lived, till he gave permission, and now, God pity us, I can not undo the evil. It may be too late even to get his forgiveness!"

"Then you disbelieve our theory that Herman Molson committed suicide?"

"Oh, I cannot, I will not believe that. Heaven is still too merciful to permit that. It is only possible to think of his suicide if he were crazed with grief or shame.

But I have my own good reasons—two of them—for believing that he lives. I know neither of these reasons would appeal to you—but they comfort me. I feel that he lives and I believe our feelings are often a truer guide to trust than our attempted reasoning. Then my friend, Mrs. Williams, tells me that he lives and I shall yet see him. I should have lost reason and health, perhaps life itself, but for the comfort she has given me. And now I must find Herman Molson or die in the attempt."

Then followed a lengthy argument on the part of the Chief to prove that Herman Molson was probably dead which I thought cruel and unnecessary under the circumstances. But to all of this Miss Lucille only replied: "I cannot answer your argument and will not attempt to. There are many seeming indications of his death and yet I feel he is living."

It was to me very pathetic to see this loving girl, smarting under her sense of her own supposed wrongdoing and pitying the unfortunate young man, who, whether guilty or innocent of the crime, was generally considered guilty. I was not sorry when the interview was over.

Miss Ashton, the heiress, did not speak to the Chief at all. Occassionally she would move quickly, as though something the Chief said had hurt or frightened her. Only once did she lift her veil as she looked to my corner of the room and when I saw her deep, dark eyes there was in them that look of patient pain I have seen in the eyes of suffering at death.

After the interview, the young ladies went directly back to Ashton Hall, but on the next evening, as I learned from Thomas Jaffery they called and had a similar interview with him.

Mr. Jaffery confessed to me his belief that Herman Molson was living, but steadily and firmly refused to give me any reason for his belief. To the young ladies he took a more non-commital attitude, refusing out of pity, I think to entirely obliterate Miss Lucille' hope, yet very carefully hiding from them his complete confidence, as expressed to me, that Herman Molson was alive. Prob-

ably he feared, if he showed his hand fully, too much pressure upon himself and that he would be unable to hide from them facts he did not then wish to become public. He promised Miss Lucille, however, that he would call upon her soon and bring her the most joyful news she had ever received. I have no doubt this gentle woman interpreted that to relate to Herman Molson. And I am equally certain that Thomas Jaffery had another idea altogether in his mind.

These visits over, Ashton Hall relapsed into its silence again and for months its two unfortunate occupants were buried in its shadows till—the great change came.

It is very fortunate that I can give the exact date when the change came over Ashton Hall and this once happy and hospitable place, was opened again to the light and air, and began once more to extend a cordial greeting to its friends as of old, many of whom had been deeply grieved over their long exclusion.

The change came like the bursting of the sun from behind a dark cloud. Everyone noted it and it become at once the talk of the city. It occurred on the morning of the sixteenth of June. I am not trusting to memory alone. I have the testimonies of half a dozen of the neighbors, also that of the post-man and the new clerk in the bank.

On the morning of this balmy, delightful day a transformation occurred not only in the Ashton Hall itself but also in the fair women who dwelt there. The beautiful and stricken women who for months had rested in the shadow of a great grief appeared at the windows and came out on the balcony and entered into the bank. They chatted with some eight or ten different people and, strange to relate, had discarded altogether the conventional weeds of mourning. They appeared in smart dresses suited to the season, had a smile and a cheerful word for all, and the Hall itself had more air and sunhine on that morning than it had received for months. Doors were unlocked, shutters opened, and one heard again the sounds of music.

It is true that everyone could see distinctly the traces of their suffering, but it was also true and patent to every observer that an expression of peace and contentment was upon their faces, a light of hope and even of joy in their eyes and unmistakable happiness in their speech.

This sudden change from the inconsolable grief of the past few months coming so suddenly and with such fullness of evidence set everybody thinking, surmising and guessing as to its cause.

What could happen, what had happened, now that their father and protector was gone, to restore to them and so suddenly the joy of life?

Had the young women convinced themselves of the folly of indulging in hopeless grief, and, by a sudden and united effort, been able to drive away the shadows in one night?

This view, for lack of a better one, was accepted by many. But among others, especially those who were former visitors at Ashton Hall and were now again welcomed, there prevailed the strong impression that something more than an effort of the will, or a mere conviction of the uselessness of sorrow, must be found to account for the change in Ashton Hall and especially the change in the young women themselves.

Some went so far as to assert that they saw in the faces of the women, heard in the ring of their voices, could distinguish in their walk and manner, abundant evidence that something of an exceedingly agreeable character had occurred, or some very happy and joyful news had come to them, or before them must have opened some prospect so unusual and intensely pleasurable as to make them forget the sad experiences of the past six months. Whatever the explanation might be, the public soon settled down to the appreciation of the fact that Ashton Hall had recovered its old-time cheer and light and music, and something had happened to transform the lives of its inmates.

This change in Ashton Hall and in the conduct of its denizens, is to be traced, as I have already said, definitely to the sixteenth of June and exactly one month later there

began the first of a series of strange occurrences at the Hall and bank which soon excited even more attention than the circumstances detailed above.

It was a new sensation and a most startling one which revived and intensified interest in this well-known family and set all the tongues of the *quid nuncs* and the wise-acres wagging afresh and with greater intensity.

On the evening of July sixteenth, as Policeman Hughson was traversing his beat on Broad street, and passing the premises, he thought he heard some sounds as of some one moving about within the bank. The night was still, the streets almost deserted, and it was twelve o'clock as he remembered to have heard the bells just before his attention was called to the noises in the bank. He stepped from the sidewalk to the bank entrance, tried the front door and found it secure. He then passed round to the side door near the rear and found this also duly fastened and examined also the private entrance door. This was also locked. He came back and listened at the main entrance. For some seconds he heard nothing and was about to pass on when he distinctly heard a drawer drawn out and soon after pushed back into place, and then there followed three distinct steps on the floor. From where he stood he judged the sound to proceed from the center of the bank and from the side nearest to Ashton Hall, which is about the location of Mark Ashton's private office.

Being now assured that someone was in the bank at this hour, and, probably, for purposes of robbery, he ran to the corner of Main and Broadway and summoned Policeman Donovan to his aid.

Coming back the two of them heard additional sounds as of a chair moved, a book or other article seemed to have been deposited on a table, and three steps as of a heavy man repeated. Noticing from the outside that the upper shutters of the front window were not locked and that they had become separated an inch or more, Mr. Hughson mounted on the shoulders of his comrade and peering through the open space, declared he saw a tall man, seated at Mark Ashton's desk and twice saw flashes of light, as from a pocket or electric lamp.

The sight of a man on the very spot of Mark Ashton's

murder, alone and apparently at ease, on this scene of blood, and bearing, as he thought in his excited imagination, close resemblance to the form of the dead Banker himself, threw Mr. Hughson into such violent emotion that he lost his balance and escaped a dangerous fall only by the assistance of his friend.

On recovering his self-possession, he told his companion what he had seen, or rather what he thought he had seen, and after a moment's consultation they decided on a course of action and proceeded to put it into execution. Crossing the streets they aroused the caretaker, Michael Hallaran, and secured the bank keys, also a key to the hallway between the bank and the residence, and coming back, they entered the bank, explored its every part and found no sign of any person or indication of anything having been disturbed in the office, so far as they were able to judge. They next proceeded to arouse the inmates of Ashton Hall, all of whom appeared to have been asleep at the time, and found none of them had seen or heard anything unusual. From the manner in which their reports were received the policemen gained the impression that the people of Ashton Hall thought some of the force had been imbibing too freely.

They next proceeded to Mr. Parish's apartments, and after arousing him and telling him their story, it was soon evident that Mr. Parish took a serious view of the situation. He questioned the policemen very fully and minutely and astounded them by the quiet and matter-of-fact way in which he alluded to supernatural happenings. "It's the very hour," he went on, "when ghosts walk."

The policemen, now recovered from their agitation, could scarcely believe their own ears. That a man of Mr. Parish's ability, an educated gentleman and a man of the world, a hard-headed business man and agent, moreover a Christian man, a convert of Mr. Moody's from Roman Catholicism in the old world, should so boldly and in such matter-of-fact way, refer to ghosts and treat a superstition so seriously, was to them almost incredible.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" asked Mr. Parish.

"Are we children or fools?" asked Mr. Hughson disdainfully, "to believe such yarns?"

"I don't believe in ghosts," said Mr. Parish, "because I know that ghosts walk and haunt the living. I have proved it in other lands, known it for many years, and" dropping his voice, "why do you think I have taken new quarters? I used to lodge above the bank. I will lodge there no more. Mark Ashton's ghost is in the bank. I have seen lights, heard sounds, had proofs. I have heard the drawer open and close, a book thrown down, the three steps taken, several times."

The policemen were astonished, not only at the belief expressed but also at the additional testimony in corroboration of their theory that someone was robbing, or preparing to rob the bank, and had access in some way, to the bank at most unreasonable hours. They resolved, therefore, to report to Captain Sloane and Mr. Jaffery and have a full and early investigation.

Before leaving him, Mr. Parish besought them to regard his statements as confidential and to refrain from mentioning his name in public or to the public authorities as he did not wish to be mixed up with the investigation.

The public, however, got hold of one end of the skein and kept unravelling it till within a day or two the whole case was well known. After all is it so wonderful that an old country superstition like a belief in ghosts should survive a good deal of education and training, since it is ingrained in the blood through centuries and will manifest occasionally in most unexpected quarters?

This story was hardly cold before another story gained the public ear and soon monopolized the thought of the people. It was the tale of a lad living about two blocks west of the bank who had served as messenger for over a year. He was, therefore, well acquainted with the Banker and clerks and must have had their confidence or he would not have been entrusted with messages and money. It happened a few nights after the policemen's experience, a cloudless evening, a full moon in the eastern sky and the hour about eleven o'clock. Frank Peterson, for that is the boy's name, had been in the country to visit his aunt and as his nearest route home lay through "The

Farmer's Alley," as it is called, a narrow alley passing along the rear of the bank premises, he was walking along this narrow passage soon after the eleven o'clock bell rang, and, when just opposite Ashton Hall, he heard some sound like the raising of a window, and turning his gaze toward Ashton Hall he declares he saw standing before the open window the tall form of Mark Ashton and distinctly recognized him. The lad was taken to police headquarters, and questioned repeatedly, and though some minor discrepancies appeared in the various versions of the story, he remained firm and consistent as to the main statement of seeing and recognizing the Banker.

By this time a large crop of rumors were afloat and even found their way to the public press. These became the one great public topic of conversation in W——e—Ashton Hall, its mysterious sounds and sights and its strange master, the Banker, the beauty of its fair orphaned daughters, and the mystery that surrounded them since they had suddenly thrown off an intolerable grief and had come into new life and hope and happiness in some unaccountable way.

These matters became so notorious that the rumors about the Hall were a sort of public infection and we, who were unwilling to accept statements without verification, who wanted to separate the chaff from wheat, sift fact from fiction, and real experiences from imaginary ones, were looked upon as hardened skeptics, and, in fact, as public enemies. We were considered, I say, incorrigible infidels, because we refused to believe what the great majority professed to know, that Ashton Hall was haunted and that the dead Banker had been seen and heard in his ghostly visits at times almost without number.

The favorite hour of his appearing was, of course, "the witching hour of midnight." For myself I never doubted the honesty and sincerity of the principal witnesses and that there must be some solid foundations for many of the stories. I also felt equally certain that the great majority of them had grown up spontaneously

around the original through the laws of suggestion and the power of the imagination.

Through the remainder of July and all of August these rumors gained increasing credence and about the first of September, the young ladies of Ashton Hall had visitors by delegations from two bodies, the police force and the ministerial association. Each delegation came seeking light and praying the young ladies in their own interests and in the interests of the general public, to throw whatever light they could on the many mysterious occurrences about the Hall and bank. If, on the main occurrences, the young ladies could throw no clear light, would they kindly and in satisfaction of the legitimate claims of public curiosity, let it be known through said delegation what had wrought the sudden and complete change in their spirits, dress, manner and general attitude toward the public on the sixteenth of June, almost coincident, let it be observed, with the many mysterious and strange occurrences about the Hall and bank.

It was not my good fortune to be present on either occasion when these delegations called. I, however, am in an authoritative position to say what did occur, as I got my information direct from Captain Sloane and from my pastor (Chalmer's Presbyterian Church).

To both of these delegations the young ladies stoutly denied either hearing, seeing or having any knowledge whatever of anything supernatural about the premises. To both of these delegations assurances of sympathy with the suffering public were conveyed by Miss Lucille, —though Captain Sloane avers he saw a mischievous light playing about the corners of Miss Lucille's mouth as she expressed it—and an earnest desire on their part was expressed to give any information in their power that would quiet the public agitation or dispel superstitious fears.

When questioned closely by the ministerial delegation as to what had led them to so sudden and unexpected a change, from the isolation and grief of their retired lives before the sixteenth of June to their cheerful spirits and friendly intercourse manifested since that date, Miss Lucille, after some little delay, had replied

to the Methodist clergyman by proposing the question "You believe, do you not, sir, in the possibility of sudden conversion?"

"It is fully taught and attested in Scripture, supported by history, and confirmed by present-day experiences," he replied.

"Then you, at least," she said, "should have no difficulty in accounting for our sudden change of feeling and consequent change of conduct. It was assuredly a case of sudden conversion. We had yielded ourselves up to grief—and grief was killing us—blotting the sun out of our youthful heavens, robbing us of strength, health and usefulness. We became converts all at once—I cannot describe to you how—to the doctrine that all things work together for good, and believing it, resolved to live as though we believed it."

"But it was so strange," remarked one minister, "it has set all our church people wondering how you could so suddenly leave off the appropriate mourning garb and wear bright raiment again so soon after—after—your great loss."

"It was this way," readily answered Miss Lucille. "we became convinced that the custom of wearing the dark weeds of mourning must have had its origin in the gloom and dread of death common to paganism rather than in the light and hope of New Testament Christianity. It seemed to us pagan in origin, pagan in its spirit and teaching and most depressing in its effects on one's spirits. We resolved to let our changed manner and clothing testify our complete change of view to the world."

And, rising up, she embraced Helena and kissed her and said, "We will never wear mourning again—shall we Helena?"

The delegation took this—as it was doubtless intended—as the close of the interview and withdrew with mixed emotions. Some few seemed impressed with her statements, others were shocked and offended at her evident good humor, and some questioned whether or not, under her seemingly careless style of speaking, there was not much hidden meaning.

MISS LUCILLE'S NARRATIVE.

It seems to me so strange and almost ridiculous that I, a home girl, and one shunning all publicity, whose chief mission up to that fatal New Year's eve, was to love and serve the noblest man that ever lived, my father, should be asked to help in making a book, in fact to write an independent chapter myself!

When first asked by Mr. John Gibson Hume to do so, I could not believe the request was a serious one and treated it as a joke. When I became convinced that he really desired me to write, in fact expected me to do so, I flatly refused saying it was preposterous and absurd. But Mr. Hume called upon me almost daily for several weeks at about the same hour and with little variation in his language or manner, to enquire if I had not made up my mind to furnish the statement asked for, until I saw I was doomed to a prolonged siege. I then determined to do what I should have done at the beginning, consult my friends. When I found the opinion was somewhat unanimous that I could probably furnish an interesting and necessary part of the story to be given to the world, and might do so, with perfect propriety, limiting my plain statement within prescribed bounds, my doubts and hesitation gave way and I gave Mr. Hume my promise to do the best possible in my new role. He left me hastily, assuring me that his wife and his minister would both be very grateful, and so the matter was settled.

I am told that I need not refer at all to events preceding the funeral or describe anything subsequent to the night when Mr. Jaffery and his assistants made the great discovery at the bank, all of which will duly appear in Mr. Hume's extended reports or in the narratives of others. This makes my way comparatively plain and simple. I am to describe in my own way as many facts as I can concerning Ashton Hall and its inmates and to record any impressions of my own on these occurrences between the periods mentioned.

I summon up my courage therefore, to go back in thought to those dreadful days of perpetual gloom and unbroken heartache that followed the tragedy, the prolonged hope deferred of the illness and the death and burial of my father.

Somehow the blackness and horror of that time seems like a dreadful nightmare—all the more terrible to bear because of the fullness of joy and hope that immediately preceded it. At times even yet—now that the clouds have almost lifted from our horizon—the old experiences come back with such sharp pain and bitter agony as to prove almost unendurable.

I do not know in starting out how to give the reader an adequate conception of the peculiar position in which I found myself placed by the awful blow which laid the strong man low and left me all but alone in the world. So much depended on my father's life just then—as he knew and as I knew. The circumstances were so peculiar that I doubt if there could be found an exact parallel in history. His life seemed not only an absolute necessity to the happiness of his daughters, but equally necessary for the completion of plans he had formed a score of years ago, and equally essential to the happiness of others outside our house circle and to the fulfilment of the ends of justice.

So far as I was concerned, my father represented the world to me. I never knew a mother's love—he was both father and mother to me. Whatever he was to the world, or rather appeared to be—stern, unbending, aggressive and severe as he was called, or as others, not knowing his real character, chose to say, unjust and cruel, he was to me always and ever the personification of goodness and tenderness. He never gave me a cross word, and when I looked upon his pallid face the last time before it was borne to burial, I could honestly say he had never consciously given me a moment's pain.

In his strong character, his clear thought, his refined judgment, his lofty purposes, I ever took increasing delight as I grew from girlhood to womanhood.

Moreover, I knew him as the world did not. I knew his large-heartedness, his magnaminity, his scorn of all

that was vile and mean and his deep abiding pity for the poor and the unfortunate. I was his almoner many a time when he was, for a purpose and in pursuit of long cherished plans, posing as the oppressor of the poor, and at the same time secretly loading them with benefits.

I was his one and only confident in those severe tests of character to which he chose to subject those very dear unto his heart that he might prove the truth of his theory of the essential goodness of human nature, when conditions and environments are right for its unfolding. I knew, as no other knew, his boundless joy when he found the character he had thrown into the crucible and subjected to fiery temptation, coming out refined and purified as pure gold, and standing the severest tests and strains to which character can be subjected, poverty linked with suffering and wealth linked with power.

Do you wonder, gentle reader, that I, as a small satellite, proud of my borrowed light, revolved around one who was both strong and gentle, patient and courageous, and one who in his own soul had become perfect through suffering.

The tragedy came, too, just at the culmination of our plans and purposes. A new will was to be made and a revelation was soon to be given that would startle the world and disclose secrets kept faithfully by the chosen few for a score of years. All the mysteries and enigmas of my father's character were awaiting full and satisfactory explanation, on the coming "day of revelation." Then the only shadows that had ever threatened the pure love and confidence that bound me to Helena—the secrets I had shared with my father and dare not divulge till the events were ripe for them—were about to be lifted and the sunlight of perfect joy and peace given back to her in full measure. All these hopes and expectations, so large, so thrilling, so full of promised blessing for others and ourselves, were to be realized and in a few days at the very latest—when the tragic deed of cruelty threatened to utterly destroy not only the plans of a life-time, but to remorselessly ruin an innocent victim.

Merciful God! How I suffered during those tear-

less days when my agony was so deep and sharp, and my burden so heavy, that no tears could be found for relief. Pity, kind souls, the human hearts so stricken that they cannot weep!

I scarcely ate or slept. I walked the floor and wrung my hands in hopeless despair and sorrow. I verily think I should have gone down into the grave myself under that weight of unexpressible grief but for one little circumstance that brought the necessary diversion of thought and feeling and opened up the fountain of my tears.

A little girl about six years of age, a child of Mrs. Perkins, a widow, was among the hundreds who called to see us in our trouble and were refused admittance. She had brought a little nosegay of wild flowers which she herself had gathered in the country as her little offering to the ladies of Ashton Hall who were, she had learned, in such great trouble and grief. When the maid told her she could not see me, she still remained seated and when the maid, supposing she was resting, left her for a moment to attend to the door, she must have arisen at once, crossed the hall and found her way to the stairway. Helena found her looking about in the hall in a dazed and wistful way and being told she wished to see Miss Lucille, pointed out my room to her. As the door was opened she, with child-like confidence, had entered before I was aware of her presence.

When I first caught sight of her, she stood shyly toying with her flowers and apparently too diffident or excited to speak, and I watched her for a moment.

Suddenly I saw a gathering cloud of emotion on her face, she turned her head away, then looking toward me again she burst into tears and said sobbingly:

"I am sorry for you. My mamma loves you for you are very kind to poor people. I went and got all these flowers for you. I am so sorry you have lost your papa. I lost my papa years ago." and turning up her sweet innocent face to me she said, "May I kiss you? Mamma always kisses us when we are in trouble."

I seized her and pressed her to my bosom and found

the tears running like rain down my cheeks. I believe that loving child saved my life.

The long agony of suspense over my father's illness, the hopes and fears that alternately ruled us, the "weary watching day by day" ending as it did in the night of death, left me so weak and dispirited that I could not attend the burial or even be present at the home services.

My grief over the loss of my father was aggravated and accentuated by the thought of my hopeless position so far as righting the unintentional wrongs which my father and I had done to others. Here I was, a bark drifting on a seemingly shoreless sea, and without a pole star or a compass or a guiding hand, or even a true friend whom I could take into fullest confidence. With the failure of our plans I had to face the reflection of the misery we had caused to those we loved best. The great wrong it now seemed to me, could never be righted. The evils must be borne—but could never be redressed. And the most excruciating of all the thoughts of my sad condition was this: that I, who of all living persons was most responsible for the wrong, could not endure the suffering entailed by that wrong but must see it fall on the innocent. This thought was like poison to my soul and threatened at one time to dethrone my reason.

During all the cruel accusations against Mr. Molson, culminating in his arrest and imprisonment, I was so stunned and helpless, so bewildered and perplexed by the successive shocks of trouble and grief, that I could formulate no plan of action. But after his escape and reported death I was, somehow, buoyed up to action again, and I resolved if money and efforts could assist in finding him, they should be given without stint, and with the finding of Mr. Molson I conceived that the first step in a possible reparation of my wrong-doing could be made.

Accordingly, I visited Captain Sloane and afterwards Detective Jaffery. The first gave me no hope whatever, He believed Mr. Molson was dead and seemed quite impatient with the idea that any one, especially an inexperi-

enced girl, should question the possible correctness of his views.

With Mr. Jaffery the language was not much different but the kind and gentle manner of the man made the total effect of his words entirely different. The interview with Jaffery gave me hope, inspired me in fact, and I felt the effects of it for days afterwards.

I could not then, nor can I now, explain the effect of that interview or give any rational explanation of its effects upon myself. It is a problem in psychology which the philosophers must settle. I am sure of one thing: there was nothing in his words, no statement or assurance in all that Mr. Jaffery said that I could build on, or weave into an argument to prove that Mr. Molson lived. In fact his words pointed in the opposite direction, but something in the man himself told me to hope. It was as though the professional detective were bidding me cease hope and cease effort and whispering that my friend was dead, while beneath it all, the kind and generous-hearted man was saying powerfully, though silently, be of good cheer, your friend lives.

I left the office with my hopes climbing upwards, despite his words, as the mercury mounts higher and higher in the hot summer day. This interview gave me something to live for and stimulated my endeavor.

Mr. Jaffery did me good in still another way. I felt that back of all his professional caution, of his few studied words to me, back of any policy he might for purposes of his own choose to adopt, there was a living, breathing sympathetic man, a brother and a friend I could rely upon and trust, and this made me strong.

When he took our hands in parting—for Helena was, of course, with me—he said, "Were it not almost sacriligious to do so, I would use the words of the Master and say, 'I shall see you again and your hearts shall rejoice,' I shall one day come to see you bringing good news—news so good you will wonder if it can be true."

I could have kissed him in gratitude for his healing words for they were like balm to my bruised heart and I felt then how true and noble a man he was, though many fear him because of his strong powers of mind.

Then I thought of my good friend, Mrs. Williams, and Helena and I drove to "The Willows" and spent an afternoon there to our great comfort. We were most kindly received and it seemed as if our trouble and burden of grief was likewise the burden and grief of that family, especially as if Mrs. Williams was "carrying our sorrows."

She was very calm but showed in the paler face and deeper inflection of her voice that she felt all the trouble and grief that had fallen on young Molson as her own.

Helena played delightfully many selections on the piano, I think since our sorrows came she has played better than ever before, and the girls sang some beautiful duets, and then I noticed Mrs. Williams closed her eyes and a slight trembling came over her frame and then she began in soft, mellifluent voice to talk upon life, its discipline, its joys and sorrows and especially upon the meaning and purpose of suffering.

I wish Mr. John Gilbert Hume had been present with his nimble pencil to catch the beautiful thought and diction of that hour. I shall never forget the quiet peace that stole into my heart with the very intonations of her voice. The thought was very beautiful, highly spiritual, and the language so chaste and simple, and most appropriate. It had its charm for both ear and heart. I am afraid to mar its beauty by any attempted description.

But two things I well remember and they were the emphasis the discourse put upon the meaning and value of suffering and the peace and hope that seemed to breathe out of the lips of the speaker and instill themselves into our hearts. She taught us that all life's experiences were disciplinary and educative, and back of all was a Wisdom Infinite, that so planned life that all things must work together for eventual good to all. Life's sorrow and sufferings were generally the means of bringing out hidden virtues. It is true that now we cannot see and understand just how all things are working together for our good—seeing through a glass as we do darkly—yet the hour is fast aproaching when we shall know and understand, see as we are seen, and find life's mysteries and enigmas all explained.

Helena was charmed beyond expression with the talk and she rehearsed it to me on the way back. She has conceived a great fondness for Mrs. Williams whom she regards as one of the noblest types of womanhood. How people change as the years go by. I well remember when a quiet woman of Mrs. Williams type of character would have had but few attractions for Helena. She has come to an appreciation of the beauty and spirituality of noble character.

Helena, like myself, has grown quite emotional under the strain of our tragic experience, and, speaking of Mrs. Williams on the way home, she burst into a flood of tears and throwing her arms around my neck exclaimed, "Oh, if I were only a woman like Mrs. Williams! If I possessed her knowledge, her lofty ideals, her noble purposes and could only make myself, like her, a teacher and an inspiration to others, life would be worth living! But I am so utterly selfish, so vain, so idle, so frivolous and so useless. I sometimes wish I were a poor seamtress or a nursery maid—rather than heiress of Ashton Hall!"

I comforted her in my usual way, told her what a dear and precious sister she was to me, and how noble and generous she was at heart, despite all the faults on the surface of her life, but she would not hear a word of it, shook off my embraces, sobbing like a heart-broken child in her penitent mood. "I'm not a bit good—not a bit."

"No wonder," said she, "that those having such a teacher grow up to be brave, noble and tender, and love right and honor more than themselves, more than life. Had I had such a teacher and such surroundings, I might have been quite different from what I am."

I agreed with her in part only, not accepting her own view of herself. I could heartily endorse all she said in praise of Herman Molson's character, but I could not help wondering if she included Mr. Molson's foster brother, Mr. Herbert Williams in the same mental category.

The dreary weeks rolled on. We immured ourselves from the world and in the shadows of Ashton Hall, dear

Helena and I tried as best we could to bear up under the dreary burden our lives had become to us, hoping against hope and wondering if at some future time the rays of happiness could fall again upon our now shadowed pathway.

Oh, yes, I remember the day well, the glad day, when happiness was born again in our hearts, and when, out of the ashes of our desolation, phoenix-like, there sprang on soaring wing a resurrected hope. It was the sixteenth day of June, to me ever hereafter the sweetest day of all the days of the calendar, for it brought to me the most blissful news which ever fell on the ears of the forlorn and heart-broken.

I was sitting in the drawing-room and had the windows raised, but the shutters still closed, allowing the pure June air laden with the breath of the rose trees and the honeysuckle to steal into the room and listening to the merry chant of the birds in the shrubbery outside. I was contrasting the gloom and sadness of our once happy home with the beauty and joyousness of nature all around us. I was wondering if the song birds would ever sing again in my heart as they sang so blithely and exultingly for weeks before the awful crime.

There came a sudden sharp ring of the door bell and I instructed the maid to first enquire who was there before admitting any one, and when she came back with the card inscribed Thomas Jaffery, I could not wait. My heart was in my throat. How I got to the door, I know not, but when I saw him, I could not speak but my face must have told him all and looked the questions which my lips could not utter. "Poor child," he said in a tone of great tenderness, "I fear by my coming I have excited some hopes I may not be able to gratify. I cannot yet give you positive assurance that Herman Molson lives but I am satisfied that he does. I am satisfied you will have ample opportunity of redressing any real or fancied wrong you have done him."

He led me gently back to the drawing room and seated me opposite the window, opened one shutter against my protest, and seated himself on the shaded side of the room opposite to me.

His manner was as tender and pitiful as a woman's, and when I contrasted his superb physical strength with his gentleness and sympathy I admired him more and more.

"I wanted to talk a little while with you," he said, "not particularly about Mr. Molson, not on any one special subject, but just as a friend and brother would talk informally.

"Sometimes a little thing, a song, a dream, a chance remark, some little incident in travel, or a few minutes chat with a friend, will change the vibrations of the brain and alter one's whole outlook upon life.

"Have you noticed that?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I replied, recalling well the difference in my feelings, and in my mental outlook after I had enjoyed my last interview with him.

"What have you been reading of late?", he asked.

"I find no pleasure in reading," I said. "All history, all biography, and all fiction seem tame and insipid after what I have passed through."

"I can well understand that," he replied "but the really great books of the ages help us when rightly studied to understand the deep experiences of our lives, just as in turn these deeper experiences throw their light on the great books."

"What do you regard as the great books, Mr. Jaffery?" I asked.

"The Bible and Sheakespeare" he promptly answered, as though there was no possibility either of denying that statement or modifying it by the addition of another book.

"I have of late been making a special study," he went on, "of Paul's doctrine of the resurrection body. I am firmly convinced Paul did not believe in or intend to teach the dogma of a resurrection of the physical body. He asserted that "flesh and blood" cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, that the old body must die and perish. I am told by competent authorities that the New Testament expression "resurrection of the dead" is literally resurrection "out of" or "from the dead," implying that the new spiritual body is evolved out of the physical

body, as the new sprout of corn grows out of the decaying body of the seed kernel.

"And I believe that this spiritual body exists now within the physical, that it is now the life and motive power of the physical, and so Paul seems to declare for he says 'There is a natural body and there is (not there will be) a spiritual body.' And further, I believe this resurrection occurs at death, in fact that death is a resurrection to a higher form of life."

"All this is very novel," I remarked "and very interesting, but it seems to make the resurrection a natural process rather than a miracle of God's power. I fear the clergy would not accept your view for I have always heard the resurrection described as miraculous, and dependent in some way upon the merit and work of Jesus as the Savior of men, the one atonement for man's transgressions."

"True, that is the old view," he said, "but the difficulties are insuperable in maintaining it. First, it is opposed to many scriptures such as I have quoted. It seems a physical impossibility. We cannot rationally believe in the resurrection of the body if by that is meant the identical particles of which it is composed. The particles of the old body becoming decomposed go to feed the life of plants and trees and flowers and they, in turn, become the food of other organizations, and thus on through the ages.

"The old view is contradicted also by the New Testament statements concerning the resurrected body of Jesus, which was so ethereal and spiritual that it readily passed through matter. This seems to have been the normal condition of the body of Jesus after the resurrection. It is true on some occasions it assumed a materialized form, as in the case of Thomas and when the risen Jesus partook of food, so that he possessed both the power of materializing his spirit body and the power also of dissipating the elements which had caused this material condition and of becoming again possessed of the spirit body only. In the materialized body which he sometimes assumed it is not at all necessary to suppose that the identical particles of the old body were present. In fact it

seems impossible to think so, and much more rational to believe that the thin ethereal envelope of the spirit body becomes gross and material by attracting to itself out of the surrounding atmosphere atomic substance and condensing those atoms which are adjacent to itself.

"I have also, Miss Lucille, been making a special study of those cases in the New Testament which speak of the "raising of the dead." As you know there are only five, three of which are attributed to Jesus, and one each to Peter (Dorcas) and to Paul (the young man).

"Do you know I believe the so-called raising of the dead to have been in every single instance a case of resuscitation of the apparently dead."

"What," said I, "do you dispute the Scripture records?"

"No," said Mr. Jaffery, "not necessarily. I do not on the other hand admit either the infallibility of the Bible, or that we can, in all cases, be sure of its historic accuracy. I take it that the New Testament accounts are substantially true as truth appeared to the writers of those times, but that many errors have crept into the narratives, and that many stories having a historic foundation, have been rounded out and filled in by the writers or compilers—according to the known custom of the times—is, I think, self-evident."

"But does not the record state that Jesus raised to life again those that were dead?" I asked.

"Unquestionably, I think Jesus raised to life those who were considered dead. The question in my mind is this: were these persons actually dead. Now if doctors today, with all the light of our increased knowledge and improved methods, are often mistaken as to whether or not death has actually occurred, and if men are pronounced dead and actually buried, who are only in a deep trance, may not it be that in every one of the five cases recorded in the New Testament that actual death had not occurred—only seeming death? We need not question the honesty and sincerity of the writers; we may question the knowledge of those times. The question is: were the writers and others who believed in the actual

restoration of the dead to life mistaken? Were the persons actually dead?

"It has grown quite common, as you know in our day even on the part of the clergy and theological professors, to question the correctness of Paul's teachings on particular subjects, because the church has so widely departed from some of his views and because it is intimated in his writings that in some cases he is giving his own view, and in others he is speaking under inspiration. If, then, Paul reflected his own limitations and prejudices and was at times mistaken, why may not other New Testament writers have been mistaken? Especially where one writer seems in conflict with another, or one book discloses views of Jesus which are entirely absent from others, or one book copies events from another, or one book records events seemingly implying the supernatural and other books, treating the same topics, can be interpreted on a rational basis? I want to summarize for you a few reasons why I believe the so-called raising of the dead was in reality the resuscitation of those apparently dead but really alive.

"First, we know more about death today than ever before. Probably within the last fifty years the world has learned more of the conditions and experiences of a man just before, during and after death, than ever before.

"Second, this fuller knowledge teaches us that real death does not generally take place for hours, often for days, after apparent death has occurred.

"Third, in trance and similar conditions of suspended animation, there is often such strong indications of actual death that only expert knowledge and skill can decide whether or no death has supervened.

"Fourth, physicians are often deceived and as a matter of fact sometimes pronounce the living to be dead. In this way many premature burials have occurred.

"And in the fifth place, apparent death is often so near to actual death that it will merge into real death unless some strong magnetic force be administered in the way of shock to the body, or some spiritual forces

present attract, through prayer or fervent desire, the departing spirit back to its tenement.

"Lastly, in trance and similar conditions the spirit entity is often out of the body and still attached thereto by slender cords of magnetic vibrations, uniting the brain of the spirit body with the old brain, or connecting the abdominal brains of the two organizations. In the last condition nature left to her own course may complete the death process by fully separating the two bodies (actual death) or, granted the presence of a strongly magnetic person, a healer, the departing spirit may be drawn back into its old dwelling place. A healer often furnishes the necessary magnetism by his touch or by sending out his spiritual forces through prayer and intense desire.

"Nearly every case in the New Testament lends itself readily to this view. Jesus himself declared that the ruler's daughter was not dead, but sleeping. In the case of the widow's son, Jesus' words and work were similar to his words and work with the ruler's daughter. The young man restored by Paul still had his "life in him." Dorcas' case is easily included with the rest.

"As to the story of Lazarus, if it be historic and not legendary, we have many things to observe. First, its absence from the other Gospels—showing it was a part of later traditions of the work of Jesus, and, therefore, less likely to be fully historic and probably introduced into the Gospel to support those advanced views of the nature of Jesus which had gained credence when John's Gospel was written. We have, secondly, the fact admitted by all Bible students, however varying may be their interpretations, that John's Gospel shows that the views of early Christians had undergone an evolution in his time, and especially in regard to the nature of Jesus, revealing a much larger faith in the marvellous and the supernatural than is disclosed in the other Gospels.

"Again with the advanced views and larger faith of John's time had come an enlargement of the Gospel narrative to correspond therewith. The highest critical authorities regard the Lazarus story as largely mythical, supposing it to have grown up around some actual case

of healing, but not to be depended on as historically accurate in details, as shown in the Encyclopedia Biblica. The statements of Jesus seem hardly reconcilable if we accept the story as entirely historic.

"Taking these facts into account and remembering that the reputed action of Jesus in the case of Jairus' daughter and the widow's son, is very similar to that ascribed to Him at the raising of Lazarus, I have no hesitation in my own mind in putting them all into one category and affirming the case of Lazarus, if historic, a case of resuscitation.

"Profane history has its records of resuscitation in the life of Apollonius, of Tyana, and others, called also "raising of the dead," but better interpreted as resuscitation of those apparently dead. I am forced to confess somewhat reluctantly, these conclusions."

He ceased but had a curious look of interest on his face and was scanning mine most attentively. It was a strange situation for me. Here was my friend who had come, as I expected, with some word of cheer about Herman Molson. Yet, here he sat entering upon a lengthy and labored argument to justify his novel view of the Bible miracles.

I could but wonder why.

I wondered why he looked at me with such a singular expression combining as it did, interest, sympathy, and a spirit of penetrative analysis, as though he would pierce the secrets of my mind and heart.

How did he think to comfort me by new views of the Bible miracles?

Did he not know, did he fail to remember that both Helena and myself were exceedingly sensitive at this time, especially to any thought of death or the grave?

Why had Mr. Jaffery, my kind, good friend, chosen to lacerate afresh my feelings?

He must have seen that this discourse was very painful to me for my tell-tale face can keep nothing back from those mesmeric eyes of his.

Probably he realized now, as his silence might indicate, what a mistake he had made and would soon turn the

conversation into other channels, or else end the interview.

No, neither source of relief was open to me. He proceeded.

"Miss Lucille, you must have been touched with the beauty of that story of the raising of Lazarus, whether it be real history or part history and part fiction, it is inimitably sweet and tender throughout.

"I have been reading it over and over again and ever with new delight. Have you read it lately? I never tire of it myself. The sweet, pure mutual affection that bound two women, into one loving group; the tender sympathy of Jesus for the grieving sisters; their heart-ache, their the Master and Lazarus and the sisters, two men and utter despair now that death had come, all expressed in the pathetic words, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;' the solemn and impressive earnestness of the Master in the majestic summons, 'Lazarus come forth,' worthy of a King and a Conqueror of death; and then the unspeakable, almost inconceivable joy of the sisters, aye, and of Lazarus and Jesus, too, in having the family circle once more restored! Who could paint it? Who could describe it?"

* * * *

He paused. His voice was really breaking with sympathetic emotion.

I don't know whether he noticed my agony; it did not seem to impress him at the time. He must have seen it. I was nearly overcome.

It was so beautiful, all that he said, yet so cruel, so cruel, though neither in voice or manner did he show callousness but the very reverse.

His picture of the two sisters and their despair over Lazarus' death was such an open and clear challenge to my thoughts to recall all that had happened to Helena and myself, such a heart-breaking challenge to me to think of the boundless joy of the Mary and Martha of the olden times, and the hopelessness of our own sad lot at present, that I wanted to utter some warning protest.

But he went on, mercilessly on.

"Do you know, I have often wondered if the sisters

had not been present on that memorable occasion (if we can conceive the miracle to have happened in the absence of Mary and Martha) if they could have been persuaded to believe it by another's testimony? If, perchance, some messenger had gone to tell them, 'thy dead brother is alive,' could they have believed it? Would it not have seemed to them utterly incredible?"

"Oh!" I cried, in my hopeless grief and excitement, "yes, they might have believed it in that happy day and in that blessed land. The heart-broken, the grief-stricken, the friendless and forlorn, had a Savior then. There walked the hills and valleys of Judea and Galilee then One who was 'touched with the feelings of our infirmities,' One 'mighty to save,' a friend, a brother to all despairing souls.

"Alas! for the heart-broken women of to-day! We cry aloud in our nameless grief and agony. The heavens are brass. There is none to deliver, none mighty to save, none to restore our dead to life!" and my sobs filled the room and shook my body as the storm shakes the bending willows.

"Ah, yes, my good friend," said Jaffery, "the same God reigns in heaven. The same Christ principle is in human nature and in the world and deliverance often comes when least expected, even when the heart is hopeless, as were Martha and Mary that time." And he rose and laid his hand upon my head a moment as in silent blessing.

* * * *

"I have strange fancies sometimes," he continued, "and they entertain me many an hour in reflection. In studying over that story last evening I imagined myself as messenger of the news of Lazarus' resurrection, to his absent sisters. Odd as it may seem to you I was in fancy on my journey to tell these sisters that their brother Lazarus lived, and I was studying out as I went along on my fancied way, just how to tell the strange story. I should find them hopeless, and would doubtless have no easy task in convincing them of the truth of my story. Then I thought of the dangers of it, how excessive joy

as well as excessive grief may cause such excitement as to result in death. I was questioning myself, in this fanciful journey and mission, as to the arguments I would use to convince them and the method I would adopt to reveal my joyful intelligence, when all at once it flashed upon me how to do it. Shall I tell you how I would have told the story? Yes, I will—a moment later.

"Of one thing I am sure, I would rather have carried such a message of hope to those two suffering women than to have been crowned a king!

"I would have tried, of course, to use both art and skill in speech, and not to overcome them with what is all too great for human minds to grasp, giving them but small installments of the truth, in hints and stories and analogies to gently lead the mind up to the mountain top of hope, where all the glorious truth would stand revealed and"—he had risen, his voice tremulous with a pathos which took hold of my very heart strings, his words at times scarcely audible, but still pressing on with his relentless story.

I, too, had risen, some faint glimmerings of his purpose stealing over the darkness of my mind, while my emotions were roused into a whirlwind of excitement, and eye and ear were both alert to catch each word and inflection of his voice, and pierce the riddle of the meaning in his face. And thus we two approached each other.

"I know I would not dare to tell it plainly," he went on falteringly, "nor say, he whom ye mourn as dead is now alive again—but I—would—make a—parable—or story—of some kind——and—let——them—draw—the meaning—slowly——"

We were face to face now and I had grasped him by the shoulder peering into his eyes for answer to the question that wrung my soul and which I could not frame in speech, when something in his manner gave me answer full and satisfactory and I shouted till my cry echoed through the rooms:

"Now, God be praised! My father lives. My father lives! Oh, Helena!" and was sinking as he caught me in

his arms. How long I was unconscious I know not, but when I regained consciousness, Helena was bending over me with heaven in her sweet face, all radiant now with hope and happiness, and whispering, "Your father is alive and well, so far restored he soon may come to Ashton Hall. The wondrous story you shall hear full soon. Praise God, he lives again."

An ecstatic feeling of joy was about the only sensation I felt, for I seemed to live only in my spiritual being.

I will not and need not here attempt to tell the long, strange tale that Mr. Jaffery had narrated of my father's rescue from the grave and his resuscitation, nor how Mr. Jaffery stayed hour after hour unfolding constantly some new wonder of the story. All this will, I am told, appear in its own place in the narrative and be better described than in my poor words.

Mr. Jaffery informed us that for prudential reasons connected with the crime and bank, my father would not return at once to Ashton Hall, but we should be taken to the hospital to see him, and also that the fact of his being alive must be kept a profound secret for the same reasons, until further investigations of the crime were complete. He also privately informed us that when at length my father did return to Ashton Hall, we must, for a time at least, keep that fact also secret from the world until the proper time for revealing it to the public.

Meantime, we must be patient and content ourselves with these severe arrangements and loyally assist him in securing not only the conviction of the criminal, but also the proper adjustment and control of the business.

This outline narrative of our home life at Ashton Hall will doubtless suggest explanations to the public of our changed manners, dress and conversation after that wonderful sixteenth day of June, a change that greatly mystified the people and led to much public enquiry, and one we found great difficulty in accounting for to our friends without revealing what Mr. Jaffery expressly prohibited us from telling.

My narrative, simple though it be, will explain another prolonged enquiry on the part of the public, namely the mysterious sights and sounds which were noted about

the bank and Hall after a certain date in July. I have no absolute proof but I entertain a shrewd suspicion that Mr. Jaffery and my father both could explain everything seemingly supernatural in these occurrences and that they had a design of their own in keeping up the talk and excitement for a time while certain plans of theirs were brought to maturity.

I have now finished the part of the story assigned me and may take my leave of the kind reader, hoping he may share the joys, as he has doubtless sympathized with the sorrows, of the inmates of Ashton Hall.

LUCILLE ASHTON.

THE SOLVING OF THE MYSTERIES.

JOHN GIBSON HUME.

It was, I well remember, in the evening of the 14th. of September that I received a note from Mr. Jaffery informing me that my services would be required the following evening at his office at eleven o'clock and requesting absolute secrecy.

On reaching the office at the time appointed I found Captain Sloane, with Donovan, Hughson, Taylor and Connors.

After greeting me kindly, Mr. Jaffery said, "I have invited you, gentlemen, to witness the culmination of certain lines of private investigation I have been pursuing since the tragedy of Ashton Hall with a view of unearthing the criminal and bringing him to justice. The case, from my point of view, was quite simple in one way from the first, yet a case with its peculiar difficulty because the criminal though well known to me had left little chance for securing any direct evidence against him, and therefore little hope of obtaining a conviction. If I have spoken on former occasions words hard to reconcile with my present speech, I justify myself by the necessity that was upon me to allay suspicion in order to have a freer hand in private study of the case.

"Even now I am doubtful, with all the circumstantial evidence at hand, if I could secure a conviction. I am relying, I may say, chiefly upon the success of my experiment tonight for securing a confession and obviating the necessity of a long and wearisome legal battle over a case which, while not at all doubtful in my mind, might prove so in the minds of judge or jury.

"I wish to declare now,notwithstanding my words and conduct to the contrary, that since the first night at Ashton Hall after the murder I have been positive who shot Mark Ashton. Step by step I have pursued my investigations, and have in hand a mass of circumstantial evid-

ence which, while weak in its separate details, is, I think, overwhelming in its combined effects. At some future time I will recite the steps taken and facts accumulated, but not now.

"Tonight, if successful in my experiment, which I am planning according to certain well known characteristics of criminals when brought into contact with the scenes of a crime, or when a crime of which they have been guilty is acted out before them, I hope to secure a confession. I say I hope, but much will depend on the way we carry out our program. Before many hours I shall have the murderer of Mark Ashton in custody to receive his confession. (Sensation)

"I cannot ask you, do not expect you to share my ardent hopes just now. You perhaps think me deluded and misled. So be it. This night shall determine. If I do not vindicate my prophecies I will confess to you my failure and the erroneous views on which I have been proceeding.

"I must ask you to accompany me to several places and give me so much of your confidence in the meantime as to obey implicitly my directions. Some surprises await you and I must warn you against taking any part by word or act, except what I have assigned to one of you here present, and to another of my assistants who will in due time appear on the scene of the murder. Please content yourselves with being deaf and dumb spectators for a time, and if our experiment is successful, you will all know when you may break the silence.

"Furthermore, gentlemen, so far as your actions are concerned, try and make them harmonize with my own. Let nothing surprise you. If I pretend not to see a thing you do likewise. Reveal nothing by your manner. Give me this silent assistance of seeing and hearing just as much and no more than I appear to do. There is a purpose in it. Do you agree?"

All pledged their co-operation but I could see that Captain Sloane entered upon the experiment with a firm conviction that he was starting on a wild-goose chase destined to failure. Indeed I overheard him say as much to one of his subordinates.

We set out about twenty minutes past eleven and soon found ourselves at the quarters of Lewis Parish, the manager of the Mark Ashton Banking Co., for, as Mr. Jaffery had explained he was to accompany us on our expedition.

After arousing the housekeeper, Mr. Jaffery was admitted and climbing the stairs was soon pounding vigorously on the door of Mr. Parish's sleeping apartments.

"Who's there?" demanded Parish, "at this unseasonable hour?"

"I, Thomas Jaffery and others, on our way to Ashton Hall, and to the bank to investigate the ghost walking. Come with us."

"Not I—at such an hour. I have no love for ghosts and goblins. I prefer my quiet room and rest."

"But you must come. Mark Ashton's murderer is yet uncaught. It's rumored how his ghost walks at midnight through the bank, and will not down, because the wretch who shot him goes unwhipt of justice. Come."

"That's fit business for the officers of the law but it is not mine," said Parish.

"Yes, it is every man's business to see that justice is done, that crime is detected and punished. Of all men, you, Lewis Parish, Mark Ashton's trusted friend, should be most earnest in finding out his murderer."

"I tell you I would not enter that cursed bank tonight for all Mark Ashton's wealth," replied Parish.

"It matters not," said Jaffery, "whether the work be pleasant or the reverse to you. It is your part in this great enterprise which we have planned. We need you and come you must. Hurry up, the time passes, no excuses now, but hurry."

We heard him making ready and in a shorter time than we expected he walked nervously down the steps but seemed to grow more confident and self-possessed as he saw our numbers and mingled with the company.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" said Jaffery.

"Yes, I believe in ghosts" said Mr. Parish excitedly "and it is the very hour—but why should I fear Mark Ashton's ghost? He was my friend. We were partners. And had he power now he would do me no harm. It

seems most strange to me—this midnight raid upon a poor disquieted ghost. How can one thousand armed men catch one poor shivering ghost?"

"Cease your senseless chatter about ghosts," said Jaffery with more severity than I had ever known him to assume. "Every man of sense knows there are no ghosts, only creatures of a wild imagination, distortions of the mind, delusions of a tricky brain gone wrong through fright or fear or guilty conscience——"

"Oh, but I know," cried Parish, interrupting, "that ghosts do haunt their old abodes. They walk where crime and murder have been done. They seek for retribution."

"That is the folly and the chatter of fools," said Jaffery, "of silly men and superstitious women. There are no real ghosts but there are real men and they are worse a thousand fold than these poor figments of imagination, you call ghosts."

"I tell you, Mr. Jaffery," said Parish, " I have seen and heard in other countries what no man can explain except by visits of the dead. I've heard in that now haunted bank such sounds at midnight as would quickly change your views and make an infidel believe in a spirit world surrounding this."

"And so you think," said Jaffery, "that ghosts can enter banks, open drawers, drop books and walk with loud resounding steps along the floor? That they can steal into back entrances, and wear disguises, and murder honest men! Do you think a ghost can murder, Mr. Parish? I tell you it is not ghosts but men we seek. We'll leave all quiet inoffensive ghosts to you and others who believe such tales. We're after men who enter banks to rob and murder!"

"And do you think you'll find any such within the bank?" said Parish. "We shall see what we shall see" said Jaffery and so ended their conversation for the time.

We had now reached Broad Street upon which the bank and Ashton Hall are located.

Parish and Jaffery walked in advance. They had just reached a corner of the vacant lot next to the bank when Parish suddenly stopped, his frame grew

rigid with fear and excitement, and, pointing to the front window of the bank, he hoarsely whispered, "The ghost light! The ghost light!"

"Where?" asked Jaffery after a brief hesitation, and in finely modulated tones, "Where, Mr. Parish?"

"Why—yonder—playing back and forth over those front windows! See it flash! You saw it then!"

"You are trying to frighten us," cried Jaffery. "There are no ghost lights there."

"I say before Heaven there are" cried Parish. "You surely see them—surely you must see them, Mr. Jaffery. Look—there they are again!"

"Parish keep your lying tongue between your teeth," cried Jaffery in real or assumed anger. "You are not going to scare us with your visions. If you see ghost lights, you see what no one else can see. Your brain is disordered, your mind is deranged, your superstitious fears have crazed you. Do you think I could not see them if they were there?"

"My God! my God!" cried Parish now thoroughly alarmed, "Do none of you, my friends, do none of you see those flashing lights over the windows?"

Then Hughson stepped ahead, while the rest of us paused, calmly peered under his hand at the bank windows and dropping his arm walked back into the company exclaiming, "It is true as Jaffery says. There are no ghost lights there. Parish is mad. stark mad."

With that I saw Mr. Parish turn as if sudden resolution had just come to his mind. "I won't enter that d——d place tonight" he cried. Mr. Jaffery's hand instantly was on his shoulder and restrained his attempted retreat.

"Come on, come on," said Jaffery, cheerily, "we'll have something more tangible than ghosts to deal with before the night is over. Men of flesh and blood, not airy nothings, and the stuff that dreams are made of, but solid men whose arms the steel can grip and hold. Come on."

And so half-leading, half dragging Parish they approached the entrance to Ashton Hall.

Quickly inserting the key Jaffery led Parish through

the door, and as soon as all of us were inside, he quickly closed and locked it.

On entering we all instinctively assumed a listening attitude. I think all of us felt the strangeness of the circumstances at that witching hour. Probably the many reports of sights and sounds about the bank at midnight, which no one seemed able to account for on natural principles, had caused us to expect something uncanny and set our nerves quivering.

We were now in the hall-way and near the spot where the murderer must have stood. The hour was midnight. The superstition of Parish, his abject, craven fear and firm unshaken faith in ghosts, could not be without some influence on our minds. The promise of Jaffery of startling surprises had excited us. Altogether, while our company was mostly made up of courageous men, it is not too much to say that every one of that number, save possibly Jaffery, was quivering with internal excitement over possible developments.

A dim light from the lower end of the hall enabled us to distinguish the objects and people about us but there was just that intermingling of shadows with the objects that tends to confuse the mind and beget fear in many persons.

Suddenly we heard just behind the partition wall, separating us from Mark Ashton's private office, a drawer open and close, then a book dropped on the table, then shortly after the three heavy steps heard and reported so many times during the last few months.

"Now—now" whispered Parish in guttural voice, "dare you say the ghost does not walk. You surely heard that book fall, the heavy steps, the drawer open and shut?"

"More lies, more foolish, brazen lies!" cried Jaffery whose purpose now in regard to Parish was evident. "Do you think we are all deaf and blind and senseless? What drawer? What book? Speak up, you shameless liar or I'll put irons on your wrists and send you to a cell."

Angered by these threats and insults Parish, who had stood trembling and cowering before, straightened up and regained in part his composure, seized the detective's

arm and swung him round towards the banker's office and cried out, "Look! Look! the ghost light gleaming through that window where the shot was fired. God in heaven! man, can't you see it ? Can't you see it?"

We all distinctly saw it as we also heard distinctly the sounds but Jaffery by no word or sign or bodily movement gave the faintest indication he had heard or seen what Parish spoke of and we all—taking our cue from him—preserved impassive face and manner.

"You gibbering idiot," cried Jaffery in real or assumed passion, "stop this ceaseless prating about sights and sounds of ghosts. Do you think these men could not see and hear as well as you if these ghostly lights and sounds were anywhere save in your own disordered brain? I tell you once more we are not here to look for ghosts but on more earnest business, to catch the thief, or seize the murderer and satisfy the ends of justice. We've better work to do than listen to your senseless raving—all pure imagination. Does your brain often play you tricks like this?"

Parish, now seemingly convinced that no one but himself heard or saw what he had described, sank helpless to the floor, limp and cowering at the detective's feet—but not for long. For just then we heard distinctly a lock turned in the far corner of the bank, evidently the private entrance from the Farmer's Alley, a door opened, and slow, stealthy footsteps moved along the narrow corridor next the back wall behind the officers, and intersecting with our hall way.

Parish sprang up, made an effort to scan the faces of the company as if to see if his senses were again misleading him or whether all of us had heard as well as he.

This time there was so dissembling on the part of Mr. Jaffery. His poised head and intent manner showed plainly he had heard and was listening eagerly to the advancing steps, and all of us quite naturally fell into the same attentive attitude.

Slowly, steadily, and stealthily the steps sounded out their ghostly signals from the stranger.

We knew he was approaching the intersection of the halls and would soon be within our view.

Jaffery, who was now apparently all excitement, laid his hand on Parish and whispered hoarsely:

"He comes! He comes! The murderer comes! He comes to shoot the Banker in his office. Now, now this is real—a real man, a real step—no vapory ghost. Watch! Watch the passage!!"

And now the steps had reached the corner of the passage opening into the wider hall in which we stood. Soon the intruder's form became visible. We held our breath and could hear the beating of our hearts. As soon as we could discern his outline plainly this is what we saw:

A stocky man in loose gray garb, apparently a farmer, with heavy sandy beard and broad felt hat, creeping stealthily along the passage, his ear close to the partition as though listening, and moving along toward us as though he saw us not.

"Look again! Look!" cried Jaffery to Parish, who was now trembling like an aspen leaf in the wind with fear and excitement. "See he comes to murder the unsuspecting Banker in his chair!"

Parish was now swaying back and forth like a reed in the wind, his eyes protruding with deadly fright, his limbs trembling beneath him, and standing only by the aid of Jaffery on his right and Hughson on his left.

The intruder moved along till he reached the wicket window, sat down a little lantern on the window base. (We had not seen the lantern till this moment as he had approached us so near the wall and by sidelong motion rather than direct approach, so his right arm and the lantern had been hidden from view)

When Parish saw the lantern a great paroxysm of trembling passed over him and Jaffery turned a scowling face upon him that seemed to restore in part his self-possession.

We saw the stranger peering through the crevice of the wooden window which closed the entrance from the hall as though he would first discover if the Banker's office were occupied or not.

Then apparently satisfied the bolt was drawn and as the window opened a little way a shaft of light came

through. Suddenly his right arm moved, we saw the gleam of a revolver barrel and heard a click and Parish springing from the grasp of his friends, cried:

"Stop him! Stop him! For God's sake stop him! He'll kill the Banker—My God, it is I—it is I——" and sank as one dead to the floor.

We picked him up as quickly as possible and carried him into the Banker's library just opposite, the door of which opened into the hallway, and laid him on the sofa.

As soon as Parish was partially restored we all turned quickly and moved back to the hall-way, as though led by common instinct. The stranger had disappeared and the window was closed.

We were now near the door opening into the Banker's private office. We stood in expectant silence—waiting, listening, watching.

No one of us could have told just what we expected to see or hear or learn. Yet we all felt the air was heavy with premonition of coming events and thus we stood rooted to the spot. We were held here as by some silent command.

We heard again a movement in the office—as if a chair had been displaced. Then three distinct steps across the floor—then upon the steps.

Now every eye was fixed upon that door—every heart palpitated with some unknown shapeless dread or secret hope.

* * * *

The door opened and Mark Ashton stood before us!

* * * *

For a moment all were silent—stricken through with doubt—and speechless.

Captain Sloane—who stood nearest—advancing peered into the Banker's face and eyes. Seizing his hand, he said:

"God knows the mystery of your coming back—but I am sure Mark Ashton stands before us, a man and not a ghost. But speak—and let us hear your voice—for

this is passing strange to all. Are you, indeed, Mark Ashton?"

Then with a courtly bow the Banker said, "I am Mark Ashton alive and well—and bid you all a welcome to these halls."

"A thousand welcomes back to life"—said Captain Sloane—for no one else had yet approached the Banker —all of us awaiting further speech.

"Strange though this may seem to you," the Banker continued, "it is even stranger to myself that I stand here alive and well—I, who was called dead and truly buried. Of all this mystery you will duly learn in time. My burial, you already know—but not that on the same night my body was stolen by thieves and carried to a dissecting room to serve the interests of scientific study. Yet I had not fully passed the bound of time and sense, not fully loosed my hold upon the physical, but was rather in that strange condition between two worlds where some slight circumstances may determine life or death, may snap the slender thread that binds the departing spirit to the clay, or, fed by proper magnetic conditions, the body may attract its departing guest back to its tenement and lengthen out the lease of life.

"Of all this strange tale you will duly learn, how one who knew of my condition through a power of sight and hearing not granted to most mortals, moved with a tender, Christ-like love, came to the rescue and supplied to my exhausted frame the vital touch which strengthened my depleted forces and called back at last the real self to live again in this frame of clay. It's not the place or time for lengthy explanation. Suffice it to say, I was more in trance than death, though I freely confess I was so near the final stage of death that had not that blessed woman been inspired to do her part just when she did, I doubtless now would be a dweller in the realm of spirit. All, all of this stranger than fiction, will in due time be given to men to read and ponder as they choose.

"Since July sixteenth, when I came secretly from the hospital here—I have been a guest of Ashton Hall. I alone am responsible for the strange lights and sounds

that have caused so much alarm within your midst. Hereafter, not as a ghost at midnight hours, but as a quiet citizen in the light of day, I'll live among the people of this city and seek the common good.

But come to the library. Friend Jaffery's work is still unfinished."

Mr. Jaffery entered first. Lewish Parish lay upon the sofa, his feet toward the door by which we entered. He was recovering consciousness and scanned each face as it drew near.

When the tall form of Mark Ashton appeared, Parish sprang to his feet as though an electric shock had passed through his frame, uttered a low cry and called out hoarsely, "Mark Ash———" and fell unconscious to the floor.

Restoratives were applied and he soon recovered consciousness again, but he had a haunted expression about the eyes, a trembling of the lips, and a deadly pallor, that was both pitiful and painful to look upon, as he glanced furtively first at Mark Ashton and then at Jaffery.

"Tell him," whispered the Banker.

Then it was that Jaffery's manner changed. He was another man. For an hour he had been to Parish as a man of iron—stern, unbending, pitiless and even insulting. Now to this poor, cowering, suffering wretch as he lay there an object of compassion he became as tender as a mother to her suffering child. Jaffery had been acting a part before: the real Jaffery was now before us and full of the milk of human kindness and the spirit of compassion. His clever but unpleasant bit of acting had served its purpose: now he was free to follow the bent of his own merciful nature.

Putting his arms around the shrinking, cowering form of Parish, he pressed the sufferer's head against his own bosom, wiped the tears from his cheeks, and whispered as softly as a compassionate mother could to a suffering child:

"Fear not, fear not, rather rejoice. See your victim lives. The grave has undone your foul deed. Mark

Ashton is alive and well. Confess it all—and seek forgiveness here and now."

The poor man looked the thanks he could not speak. He tried to look upon Mark Ashton's face, but could not fix his gaze. He put his hand above his eyes and screened them, as if the sight was hurting him.

He sat upon the sofa supported by Captain Sloane upon the one side and Jaffery on the other, uttering only inarticulate moans, but at times his lips essayed speech but failed to find the words.

Then the generosity of Mark Ashton triumphed and drawing near he laid his hand upon the hand of Parish and said: "Speak out all the truth and fear not. My heart is full of pity, not of vengeance. Glad as I am to escape the grave and death for my own sake and for those I love, I can equally rejoice for your sake. Speak —we are all your friends."

Then it was that Parish found voice and falling on his knees at the feet of the Banker he seized and kissed his hand and cried aloud between his sobs:

"Yes I did it! I shot my benefactor! I forgot all his kindness through all the years. Oh, cursed love of gold! Oh, wretch accursed am I. I deserve a thousand deaths." And turning away with a shudder he cried out: "I cannot, cannot look upon his face. It maddens me. Take me away—to prison—anywhere—I cannot look upon his face."

Then Jaffery produced a written confession setting forth the details of the crime, the studious preparation Parish had made, his carefully prepared alibi, his visit to the neighboring town, his going to the theatre, his quick departure thence, his speedy disguise as a farmer, his engagement of a livery, his swift drive to W——e, his entrance to the Farmer's Alley and to the bank, his hearing of the heated discussion between the Banker and Herman Molson, the fatal shot, his swift return and subsequent meeting with the agent—all in detail and prepared in advance by the detective for the signature of the criminal.

Not a line had to be altered—not a detail omitted—save as Mr. Jaffery explained he did not know whether

to place the theft of the revolver on the part of Parish in the afternoon of the murder, when he was known to have been in Ashton Hall, or in the evening just before the murder. This Mr. Jaffery had to guess at and so instructed his representative in re-enacting the murder scene to bring the revolver with him.

It turned out on Parish's statement that the revolver was secured in the afternoon so the surmise of Jaffery was correct and his dramatic presentation of the murder scene was absolutely true to life.

Next day the city papers were full of the marvellous story. The mysteries of Ashton Hall were explained. The Banker was alive and well. The would-be murderer was in jail and a full confession of the crime had been made.

For some weeks after Ashton Hall was thronged with friends who came with their congratulations and many reporters and journalists came to get authentic statements, and medical and scientific men came to ask questions and seek solutions of the many wonderful phases of the sickness, death and resuscitation. It was the sensation of the day and many seemed incapable of believing the truth of public reports till they had personally visited and looked into the face of the man who was dead and is now alive again.

Rumor declares that even now in the neighboring towns are found men who steadfastly refuse to believe the story.

Parish made full confession not only of the murder of the Banker, but also of the motives and feeling which actuated him, and even went so far as to include a recital of how he had deceived Mark Ashton from the beginning. The letter of commendation to the Banker which Parish had used as an introduction he had surreptitiously obtained from a fellow passenger on board an Atlantic steamer—a passenger, by the way, who was missing when the vessel reached its port and never heard from again.

Parish assumed this man's name and from the beginning of his service with Mark Ashton had coveted the Banker's gold. He sought the hand of the heiress

but had been spurned. During the last four months he had noted changes in the Banker and by intercepting some mail between him and Mr. Williams had made a startling discovery of a secret in Mark Ashton's life. He had noted, too, many indications of the Banker's growing fondness for young Molson, and learned that the Banker for some reason was acting a part before the junior clerk and was in reality a great admirer of him, and desired to take him into the firm as a partner. And so, stung by the contemptuous refusal of the heiress to accept his hand he saw in the Banker's growing fondness for Molson—despite all his wordy conflicts with that young man—and having discovered in correspondence which he had intercepted Mark Ashton's contemplated changes in the business on New Year's Day, how his hopes of getting control of the fortune were swiftly vanishing, unless something should delay or frustrate the plans already formulated. The quarrel between young Molson and the Banker—duly reported to him by the servant girl in his employ—showed the possibility of directing suspicion upon the junior clerk and helped to bring matters to a speedy crisis.

Hence the carefully prepared alibi, and the dastardly deed, which brought such a world of suffering to all concerned.

THE MIDNIGHT RIDE AND ITS WEIRD RESULTS.

Mr. John Gibson Hume has, after most persistent efforts, convinced me that I owe it to the cause of truth to tell the public through these pages what occurred on the evening of the 26th. and the morning of the 27th. of March 18——— both at our home and on the way to W——e and in the dissecting room of the Medical College.

I make no pretense to literary form or grace of style, yet I hope my narrative of these remarkable events will not be lacking in clear statement and—wonderful as it may appear—will be accepted as the honest statement of an important witness. I am the only competent living witnes of events to be disclosed in the first part of this narrative. Most fortunately for me, and for my reputation for truth and sanity, I am not the only witness of what occurred in the dissecting room, and even if I were, the presence of a man living, moving, acting in our midst, who was once pronounced dead and actually buried, would furnish in itself sufficient confirmation of our story.

I need hardly say it has been extremely difficult to overcome my native repugnance to publicity. When I found Mr. Hume actually contemplated the insertion of some accounts of the peculiar experience of Mrs. Williams in our home life, as well as the striking episodes narrated in this chapter, my whole nature rose in revolt and I absolutely refused to write up this experience or to allow the secrets of our home life to be trailed before an incredulous and ignorant public.

It was only when I became convinced that something would be published, probably gathered from rumor and its few facts distorted and enlarged by imagination, that I determined to make a statement under certain specified conditions. I frankly confess I am writing this chapter as much in defense of the sanctity of my home and the security of my own fireside, as for the purpose of round-

ing out the editor's narrative of Ashton Hall and its mysteries.

I am, therefore, to state as much or as little of family history as I choose and the editor has agreed to allow no other member of his corps of contributors to announce matters that belong sacredly to our home life. I shall, therefore, tell only enough of our family history to make plain the special incidents that are here to be given in detail.

I am told I need not enter upon the subject of Mr. Molson's case nor the mutual interests the Banker and my family had on social and business lines for the last seventeen years. These will be disclosed, I am informed, in their proper place in the volume. I will, therefore, content myself with two general statements regarding the past.

The first one is this: Mrs. Williams and the Banker's wife were first cousins and we have, therefore, been very well acquainted with each other for over a score of years. We have been deeply in the confidence of the Banker and have known and assisted in the peculiar purposes he had in view and which were kept so closely veiled from the world till now.

I enter upon no defense of the Banker. It is useless for two reasons. Those who know all the facts fully need make no excuse for him. Those who do not know his full life will doubtless continue to take his assumed life for the real one and would not be satisfied with such facts as we are prepared at present to give. With regard to the wisdom of the Banker's project and secret purpose in life—well, every man must form his own opinion. This book will, I believe, in its various parts, disclose the whole story so every one must judge for himself. After the reader has perused the whole account he will be in a better position to judge of the wisdom or folly of what Mark Ashton essayed to do and whether the results attained were worthy the risks run and the sacrifices and sufferings endured.

The second fact is one much more difficult for me, as a reserved man, to explain and for the reader to comprehend and accept as truth. It is a subject Mrs. Will-

iams and I have guarded sacredly from the public gaze for a third of a century and if we drag it out now before the critical and censorious judgment of men it is only, for reasons given above as a choice of the lesser of two evils. But for the strange and tragic story given in this volume, we should have enjoyed the seclusion and serenity of our peaceful home without attracting to us the doubt and scepticism, the ridicule and even persecution of the public who are opposed to belief in the possibility of present-day miracles. Every family has its skeleton, yet but few guarded the closet door more sedulously than we.

For some generations the Molson family, from which my wife and Mrs. Ashton traced their lineage, has had strange experiences. From the reading of history and the close observations of what I have witnessed in my own family through Mrs. Williams, I do not doubt that if she had lived among the people of ancient Israel she would have been called a prophetess or seeress. In the darkness of the middle ages when the peculiar experiences of prophecy, seership and significant dreaming were looked upon as evidence of communion with the powers of evil, she might have been tried for the exercise of black art. In the days of the Salem Witchcraft had she lived in New England and the inner facts of our family history been duly published to the world, she would likely have been tried for witchcraft.

And yet a more womanly woman, a more refined, sensitive and unselfish spirit, a more truthful, conscientious and unswervingly faithful soul never breathed the vital air. If the reader knew her transparent simplicity, her devotion to truth and right, her love of all that is good and beautiful, her tenderness for all in distress and sorrow, he would not wonder that we, husband and children and Mr. Molson whose character she largely formed, worship her as the best and noblest expression of goodness and grace given in human life!

Yet from childhood this woman has, she asserts, seen what others could not see, heard what others could not hear, and been conscious in some unknown and unexplainable way that about her were the forms of invisible

intelligences and through their ministry she has become to her family and a very few chosen friends an oracle through which revelations of truth and messages of love have come from the invisible realms of life.

When first I knew her and before our acquaintance had ripened into mutual affection, she frankly told me of her peculiar spiritual experiences and I heard the story with all the native doubt and scepticism of one educated as I had been in materialism and open unbelief of any life beyond this. Her stories seemed to me like "strange tales from some far off land," like, in fact, a daring repetition in this age of science and rationalism, of the old wonder stories of humanity's childhood—stories of angels and spirits and miracles and prophecy, all of which were laid away securely labelled in my mind under the one term, "superstitions."

I soon learned, however, to believe in her honesty and sincerity, much as I questioned the truth of her theories, for no one could look into her eyes and listen to her speech without seeing sincerity written large on her countenance and hearing the genuine ring of honesty in every tone of her voice. I set to work as a friend to solve for her the peculiar experiences which had, I thought, mystified and confused her brain but I ended after some five years trial in accepting her views as my own.

I believed at first that all her experiences were mental, purely subjective, the work of her fancy, the play of an active imagination. In less than six months of friendly intercourse and study of her case I fully satisfied myself of the objective reality of many of her experiences. I need not detail events; but when I found that her dreams were significant and often prophetic, her prophecies fulfilled, her warnings and premonitions, though not always veridical, yet generally so, and that in her presence writings and pictures were produced in some unaccountable manner on paper supplied by myself and held between two slates, I found my theory of explanation insufficient.

I then adopted another hypothesis—which in fact explained nothing for it sadly needed explaining—yet it sufficed to hold me, as in a half way station, for

a time. This theory holds that the subconscious personality is endowed with certain remarkable powers and among them that of mind reading and the ability to affect without contact material objects, and in fact to bring about a variety of strange demonstrations outside the organism of its possessor, and that through these uncanny powers of the living man, rather than the intelligent forces of discarnate spirits, the so-called miracles were wrought.

It was in vain that Mrs. Williams pointed out to me that in either case the so-called writing must be spiritual in its origin for it certainly was performed frequently without touch—and that in nearly every case such writing claimed to be the work of a departed spirit, a distinct intelligence, and that the writing furnished information altogether unknown to the individual in whose presence it occurred—and that the theory of a separate intelligence or discarnate spirit as the author of the writing, was much more rational and involved less difficulty than the theory I had embraced. It made no difference. I was an Ephraim joined to his idols.

After some months of discussion on this point, it chanced that when I was in a distant city in which I was an utter stranger, and in presence of one endowed with similar mysterious powers, I saw a form grow up before me, taking shape out of a wisp of swirling, milky white nebulous something and becoming at last as clear in outline and distinct in shape as any human body. As I looked, to my amazement there stood beside me dripping with water, a body having every resemblance of height, hair, face and manner to my college mate drowned some days previous, before my very eyes in the river. He spoke but little, but gave his name and related in part the circumstances of his death, and where the body would be found. When we afterwards found the body in the spot indicated, I gave up the theory I had so persistently, not to say obstinately, held. I was forced to admit the possibility of the soul's survival of bodily death and of its ability under certain conditions to communicate with mortals.

Then I began a somewhat systematic and extensive

study of the so-called miracles of all religions and was surprised at two things: first, the great similarity in them, as described by their various adherents, and secondly, the fact that all of them seemed to occur directly through the presence and power of angels or spirits, or in presence of those who, according to the records, had the power to see and converse with angels and spirits. I was also surprised to find that, admitting the continuity of life and the agency of spirits in human affairs, all religions seemed to be very similar in general character. I also found this hypothesis would explain many seemingly unexplainable characters and happenings in history and a multitude of reports and rumors found among all nations as to apparitions and reappearances of the dead. In short my five years' experimentation ended in my adoption of Mrs. Williams theory of psychic experiences, rather than in the solving of the problem on a materialistic basis. Small wonder that while my intellect was engaged studying these problems in the presence of a very attractive and beautiful girl, my heart became touched with the beauty and charm of her face and manner, and the purity of her thought and speech. When, after some delay, she accepted me as her future husband, it was with the distinct understanding that her peculiar experiences were to be kept a profound secret from the world and disclosed to only a few bosom friends of her own choosing. Mrs. Williams was always impressed with the thought that only a few, a chosen few, were ready to receive, understand and profit by these mysterious happenings, and so even our own children were not fully instructed in them, and when Mr. Molson came into our home circle as a child of three, it was understood that he, too, was to be excluded from the full knowledge of the family secret. This, I am told, will explain some passages in Mr. Molson's journal.

From the period when Herman Molson left us to the date of the tragedy at Ashton Hall, I had from the lips of Mrs. Williams many intimations of the coming of dark days into the life of our dear young friend—son we almost call him for we ever loved him as our son.

At one time it was a dream in which she saw him

at sea upon a shattered boat, rising and falling on the lofty billows, midst pitiless wind and rain, clinging for life to frail timbers and scanning eagerly the horizon during flashes of light for some friendly face or hand, but in vain. Then again it was a day dream or vision in which she saw him wandering in the maze of a trackless forest alone and discomfitted, and trying to find a pathway out to civilization again. At still another time she heard him calling for help, and in tones of such despair as wrung her heart, from some deep pit into which he had fallen and which hid him entirely from view and threatened his destruction.

But in all of these experiences which she interpreted to me—knowing the meaning of the signs and symbols as she did—she caught, before they completely passed, a glimpse of a rainbow which she confidently declared meant his safe survival of the storm and his great joy and happiness after excessive trials and sufferings.

Coming out of these experiences she was always more or less agitated and generally in tears, for she loved Herman as her own son and took a noble pride in his character and accomplishments.

Yet Mrs. Williams was never long depressed for she declared that all his trials were temporary and for a purpose. They could not be escaped, he must pass through them, but out of them would come as gold seven times refined.

And so when the news of the tragedy reached us and Herman's great grief and forebodings, she simply announced that she was not surprised nor faint-hearted; the dark days were coming but he would not lose either life or hope and that the destiny that shapes our ends was becoming more and more manifest in his life and events were ripening to a climax.

"My poor, dear suffering Herman"—she would say—as if he were present, for she has the strange fancy and habit of talking to the absent as if they were near her—"the dark days are at hand and darker ones are to follow. Be patient and brighter days will surely come."

For some time preceding the death and burial of the Banker, the wonderful experiences of our mid-night ride

and the strange service in the dissecting room, Mrs. Williams was much depressed in spirits and on coming out of these fits of depression and gloom, would assure me that wonderful events were at hand and she seemed to be passing under the shadows of these forth-coming events.

Once in a while she spoke to me under influence prophetic words which found fulfilment in the days which followed.

"He goes down to the valley—the shadows fall upon him—the earth opens her bosom to receive him—yet the sands are not yet out of his glass—he has much work to do here—he shall not fall but rise—they that are for him are greater than all the forces against him. Out of thy hands, O Death, I will rescue him—truth and love shall triumph." These were some of the enigmatic words that I heard her speak.

She was accustomed when any sorrow or trouble was upon her family or friends to be much in her own white room on the third flat know to our family as "The Sanctuary."

Here she waited upon the spirit realm and in this "secret place" believed things were possible to her which she was incapable of realizing anywhere else.

No one but she and I ever crossed its threshold. I was permitted only rarely to enter this room; into it she always went robed in white. The room was chaste, the walls, floors, ceilings and furniture were white.

Sometimes for days at a time we saw but little of her and for some days preceding the events of this chapter she favored us with but little of her company.

At dusk on the evening of the third day of her "waiting" she came down and joined our service of song and talked cheerily with us for an hour. She drank some water and ate a small piece of bread and bade the children good night.

"I shall see you later," she said to me as she repaired again to her lonely room. "Be ready to come to me as soon as the bell rings. And, husband dear, is the span of blooded bays in the stable? I have an impression

we shall drive this night. I shall know all in due season. Have them harnessed and ready if we need them."

I could conceive of no possible use for the blooded bay team or any cause for a night journey. Indeed, horseman as I pride myself on being and fearless of wild and mettled horses as a rule, I should hesitate long before I attempted and on a dark night, to hold the reins over these spirited brutes. However, I saw no harm in acceding to her wish in having them in readiness. Accordingly I ordered my coachman to see that they were harnessed. He looked at me as though doubting his senses, but having satisfied himself that he had heard aright, proceeded to obey orders.

Half an hour later the hall servant came in to announce that the coachman had the bays in readiness but had been badly bitten on the arm by one of them and the doctor had been summoned. If I needed a coachman one of the farm hands would be in readiness.

It was precisely half-past twelve—I noted it by the mantel clock just opposite where I sat reading—when the bell from the "Sanctuary" gave a vigorous ring and I, ascending the stairs, found my wife hurrying from the room prepared for a journey.

"The team, the team!" she shouted rather than spoke. "The team at once—Mark Ashton's body is stolen from the grave. We have no time to lose—the team, the team!"

I saw she was not in her normal state and instantly decided to follow implicity her directions. The farm hand assisted me and in a few moments the carriage was at the door. Mrs. Williams and I took the front seat, the man sat behind and the start was made.

It was a dark night. The moon had become obscured by clouds but there was still light enough to see the roadway and there seemed little danger at this hour of meeting carriages.

I gave them their heads and we drove at a rattling pace along the river road, down past the old Brown mill, over the cross plains bridge and had reached the Cruikshanks wood before anything of note occurred. Here, as all who are familiar with the locality will remember, the

road is somewhat rough and the turnpike high, and as the clouds had thickened, I saw the necessity of caution and of "slowing up." But this was precisely what the horses did not want. They had gained their second breath, become intoxicated with the cool night air and the frenzy and excitement of our novel trip, and both began to show signs of impatience and temper—the off one, vicious brute that he is had bitten a large piece from the coachman's arm a few hours before and now began to rear and plunge in a disagreeable and very exciting way.

I am a strong man and I had upon those bays a bit which I thought could curb any horses in the country, yet I felt the team was gradually getting beyond my control. From a trot they broke occasionally—first one and then the other—into a gallop and by and by, both of them were running. We were at this time past the narrowest and worst of our road but were rapidly approaching the city where teams were liable at any moment to be met and where—unless the horses could be brought under control—disaster or even death seemed almost certain.

Meanwhile, my wife sat as one dazed and silent, whether from fear or faith I could not tell, until we reached the post road just outside the corporation, when suddenly springing up she seized the reins, crying out in deep masculine voice, "Give way, Give way. Life depends on it. The reins! The reins!!" And before I had fully sensed the situation, the reins were in her hands and the horses began to slacken their pace though still running.

My arms fell lifeless by my side—so great the strain had been upon them for the last hour—and I sat in dumb amazement as I saw a woman subduing the team which a few moments before threatened to get beyond my own control and destroy our lives.

From a gallop to a trot the horses settled down in pace and gradually seemed tamed of their excitement.

We reached the town and turned on Main Street when the city clock pealed out the hour of two. Then occurred a strange thing.

Roused as from a reverie by the striking of the clock, Mrs. Williams shouted, "We must hurry." Seizing the

whip which none had ever dared to draw upon the spirited animals, she struck each one a stinging blow.

Like a flash both leaped the same instant, and, trembling in every limb, scarce touched the ground as the carriage swayed and hurled from side to side with the rapidity of our motion. Down Broad Street for three blocks, we passed the bank, the stone church on the corner, the business block—all of which rushed by us like the wind, and, swinging round the circle of the Park at such a breakneck speed that it seemed every instant must be our last, up Sixth Street to Pine, and down Pine to Locust, with terrific pace until without warning the horses stopped with such suddenness as to almost precipitate us out of the carriage.

Turning to the frightened farm hand in the rear seat, Mrs. Williams—who now assumed entire control—cried out: "Call Thomas Jaffery who lives here. Tell him to come at once."

The horses stood trembling with excitement, their bodies covered with white foam, and their shapely ears constantly in motion till Jaffery walked out quickly and took his seat in the carriage. He brought a couple of revolvers with him, one of which he gave to me and one to the farm hand, remarking, "You may need then; keep them in readiness."

We were again under motion—this time more subdued but still rapid—and in a few moments were in the shadow of one of the large buildings of the Medical College. Here emerged out of the shadows two policemen whom Jaffery addressed and to whom he gave orders. "Follow me," he said as we alighted from the carriage and approached the door. "Have you secured the guard and the key?" asked Jaffery of the man at the door.

"The guard is here in irons and the door is open" answered the man. Then Jaffery and one policeman ascended the steps followed by Mrs. Williams and myself, while the third policeman served as rear guard. We passed into a wide and well lighted hall, down a stairway to a narrow and poorly lighted passage way, into a second and a third hall when we reached the entrance

to a large room in which were six tables, covered with white cloths.

As we entered two men near a table at the farther corner, suddenly turned, and would have fled, but Jaffery ran so quickly to one door and his comrade to the other, leaving the second policeman and myself to guard the door by which we entered, that the young men saw the futility of attempted flight and readily submitted to be handcuffed.

The doors were then locked. Mrs. Williams stood at the head of the center table, and Thomas Jaffery slowly lifted the white cover first from the head and then from the entire body disclosing to us the pale and emaciated features of Mark Ashton.

Then I observed Mrs. Williams assume an attitude of prayer with clasped hands and uplifted face, and a solemn sense of awe came over us which hushed us all into profound silence.

For some moments she remained with upturned face in mute appeal to Heaven. Even the shrinking awe-stricken students and the sturdy policemen felt the pathos of that scene which held Jaffery and myself as by some magic spell. Then her lips moved in prayer: "We thank thee Oh, Thou Infinite One, that Thou hast brought us the light of life and given us to know that death is but a shadow and life the one reality.

"We bless thee that through the administration of angels we have been taught that we shall arise triumphant out of the arms of death into the life that is everlasting, and progressive in its unfolding of power and wisdom and love.

"We rejoice that life is ever lord of death and that this knowledge is fast coming into the darkened minds and sorrowful hearts of men.

"We thank thee, Oh, Father, that through the blessed angels thou hast brought us to this place for this work. May wisdom and power and the blessing of the realms of Spirit be upon us here, and now may we have strength sufficient to meet the demands of this crucial hour. Amen."

* * * * *

It was a strange scene—and probably never had there been one just like it. A large hall with bodies of the dead laid out for dissection, two manacled culprits sitting on low stools at our feet and watching with intense interest every word and movement—two policemen awed as their faces showed by their strange surroundings and the solemn manner of the leader, while Jaffery and myself, full of wonder, reverence, vague hope and expectation, stood watching one whom we conceived to be acting under the guidance of an Invisible Intelligence and Power.

She paused and repeated a few lines from Tennyson's "In Memoriam" and Emerson's, "Soul Prophecy."

"How pure in heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thoughts would hold,
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou or any call
The spirits from their golden day,
Except like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all."

* * * * *

All before us lies the way;
Give the past unto the wind;
All before us is the day;
Night and darkness are behind.

Eden with its angels bold,
Love and flowers and coolest sea,
Is not ancient story told,
But a glowing prophecy.

* * * * *

When the soul to sin hath died,
True and beautiful and sound,
Then all earth is sanctified,
Upsprings paradise around.

Then shall come the Eden days,
  Guardian watch from Seraph eyes,
Angels on the slanting rays,
  Voices from the opening skies.

From this spirit land afar,
  All disturbing force shall flee;
Stir nor toil nor hope shall mar,
  Its immortal unity."

Then broke from her lips in ringing tones, clear and musical:—

"Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom,
    Lead thou me on,
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
    Lead thou me on.
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene;
One step enough for me.

"So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
    Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrents, till
    The night is gone,
And with the morn those angels faces smile
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile."

And as the closing words fell from her lips she stooped over the prostrate form of the dead Banker, and, lifting his head upon her arm, she pressed it to her bosom, crying out in clear, resonant and earnest voice: "Mark Ashton, come back to this tabernacle of clay! Thou hast yet a hold upon this mortal form. Thou canst again re-animate it. Seize again thy body and come back to earth once more.

"Come back to those who love and long for your presence. Come back, thy earth life is not finished. Come back and complete thy life mission; undo the existing wrongs and make thy children happy.

"Come back, Mark Ashton, come back!"

Her voice rolled in sonorous majesty through the large room and echoed through the corridors.

What was it? Everyone was startled, for from the the bloodless lips a moan was distinctly heard. Then, as we all gathered in breathless expectancy near the Banker's body and stood gazing on his pallid face, we saw a slight trembling of the eyelids, then there came forth another moan, the eyes opened but closed again. We saw a movement of the chest; instantly we set to work to rub and chafe the arms and body to produce some semblance of regular breathing. Soon again the eyes opened and closed. In half an hour there was a slow breathing. One of the medical faculty was summoned and restoratives given. There was no speech or apparent consciousness, but every indication of returning life.

Those present were pledged to refrain from any mention of the incident for the present, the culprits being freed on pledge of profoundest secrecy. The body was wrapped in warm flannels and conveyed to a private ward of the hospital and two days after to a private hospital, where, step by step, Mark Ashton fought his way back to the control of his physical organism and to the consciousness and memories of his former life.

It was a week before he spoke and some weeks before his physicians were sufficiently assured of a full recovery to warrant breaking the news to his daughters.

When the body had been given over to the doctors, Mrs. Williams seemed to sink into unconsciousness. We carried her to the carriage, Mr. Jaffery accompanying us home.

The morning light was breaking over the eastern hills as we laid her to rest in her room, thus closing the most eventful night's work in which I ever participated. Mrs. Williams slept until six o'clock that evening and when she awoke seemed in no way ill, except from weakness and exhaustion from which, with good care and nursing, she speedily recovered.

JOHN EBEN WILLIAMS.

DISAPPEARANCE OF HERMAN MOLSON.

(The Diary Continued.)

New York, Sept. 28th, 18—.

After the stormy experiences of the past three months, I am again permitted, through the faithful kindness of my friend, Herbert Williams, to look upon and possess my Diary again. Forced from my hands as I was hiding it at "The Willows" by the police who arrested me, under the impression they would find in it some evidences that would incriminate me, I have now the great satisfaction of learning that Lewis Parish has confessed the crime and I stand vindicated so far as the murder of Mark Ashton is concerned.

Stranger still, the murder turns out to have been only attempted murder, for Herbert writes me that Mark Ashton lives. He has seen him, conversed with him, and his rescue from the bonds of death is clearly traceable to my truest friend, to whom I owe more than to all others combined. I can but rejoice for much as I despise and even hate many of the qualities of character in that most singular man, I cannot but admire him in many ways and rejoice that he has opportunities still of cultivating the good and repressing the evil in his peculiar nature.

What a revelation it must have been to Miss Ashton and Miss Lucille! The events that have occurred there within the last eight months would make the framework of a thrilling novel.

But "vindicated" did I say I was? Alas! that I should have to write it. I was cruelly wronged and irretrievably injured by well-meaning yet over-zealous and ignorant officers of the law, a law that should seek just as zealously to protect the good name and unblemished reputation of the innocent as to ferret out and punish the guilty. Officials assume an immense responsibility in arresting men on purely circumstantial evidence, and often outrage the feelings, ruin the reputation and over-

shadow the lives of those who, like myself, are purely victims of circumstances.

And what public vindication can ever make good to me the shame, the horror, the unspeakable dread, the inward loathing and disgust attaching itself to arrest and imprisonment? We shall never have justice done in this or any other land until men who order the arrest of innocent persons are subject to adequate punishment themselves.

Bitter as had been many of my experiences of the past year, all of them seemed trivial and commonplace compared with this. When the steel was placed upon my wrists and I fully realized the awful catastrophe that had come upon me, the shame and disgrace of it almost smothered me. It seemed as if the very air was poisoned and my lungs refused to breathe it. How gladly I would have laid down the burden of my lonely life at that hour! How gladly I would have passed into the dreamless slumber of eternal silence, or into a world where I should be free from man's inhumanity to man, and where false and cruel words, and more cruel deeds would be unknown.

One thing saved me. The very extremity of my grief and anguish brought on a sort of torpor in which for a time I was dead to my immediate surroundings. Whether it was sleep or not, I do not know; whether a normal dream or a day dream I cannot tell, but for the most part of the first day and night I was mercifully saved from that extreme soul suffering which proceeded and followed this period. In this state I was, fancy free, at liberty, it seemed, to roam the universe and I seemed much of the time to be moving swiftly through space with the rapidity of thought. Nor was I alone. About me, I thought, were beautiful beings whose radiant faces and glistening garments were sweet to look upon and whose words of cheer and hope and ineffably sweet music thrilled and delighted me.

And again I was in the midst of trees and palms and flowers, lovely landscapes, sparkling fountains and flowing streams, whose every motion was music. Birds of varied plumage charmed the eye with their bright colors

and filled the air with an infinite variety of sweet song. The very flowers were musical and the dancing light upon the fountains was musical. I remember watching buds unfold, and at the same time, listening to their ethereal song. I was in a realm where all of nature's operations were attuned to music.

But this did not last beyond the first day. On the second day when Herbert came and brought me back to the realm of physical realities, my visions vanished, and the present with all its unspeakable shame and horror held me firmly in its grip.

Then began that trembling vibration passing over first one lobe of the brain then another, and the slow, creepy sensation over my limbs and arms, followed by a nervous dread and sinking apprehension of danger that cannot be fitly told in words. What I suffered in the next two days cannot be understood save by sensitive natures like my own who have felt the steel enter their souls. Even now I have only to recall myself as sitting in that narrow cell to live over again the hell of torment —partly physical but mostly spiritual—that I endured during those awful days and nights.

On the evening of the third day's imprisonment, I was blessed with some natural sleep, and awaking about midnight passed into the semi-trance condition in which I was not wholly lost to consciousness of my surroundings but enjoyed a changing phantasmagoria of scenes and forms that served to relieve my mental strain and suffering. Gradually consciousness to surroundings seemed to have been suspended for in the dream that followed I did not appear to be in prison but in my own attic room at "The Willows."

Here in my dream there stood beside me a heavenly woman—I know no better term with which to describe her—of most lovely countenance, beaming with kindness and good will and clad in shining raiment thrown in graceful folds about her form. She stood close beside my bed and I gazed upon her, strange to say, without either fear or curiosity as to who she was or what her mission. She stood with bared arms holding in her left hand a small scroll and pointing with her right hand to

the record of the scroll she read in clear and beautifully modulated voice a record which I at once recognized as the New Testament story of Peter's deliverance from prison by the angel and found in the Twelfth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Here is the story as read to me in my dream vision, but I noted on recalling it next day that its phraseology seemed a little peculiar and got the explanation only when I read the story after my release in the revised version:

"Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him. And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and guards before the door kept the prison.

"And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell; and he smote Peter on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

"And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garments about thee, and follow me.

"And he went out and followed and he wist not that it was true that was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.

"And when they were past the first and second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out and passed on through one street and straightway the angel departed from him."

Then she looked up from the reading of the writing and smiled on me with such love and tenderness, such hope and cheer, that I seemed to be in a heaven of holy rapture for a moment and then she spake:

"Thinkest thou, Herman, that all God's angels are dead? That Providence does not still watch over human lives, influence human minds and hearts, throw light on human pathways, and, sometimes, still open prison doors when some great cause requires angelic aid, or some true soul is sorely tried and needs deliverence? Thinkest thou the former days were better than thine own—that God loved his children more in days gone by or that the angels then were nearer unto men, or that what then was possible and true is now no longer possible? I tell thee, Nay. God's love and power are still the same, heaven is even nearer now than in the olden times, and but for fear and doubt which block the way, God's holy angels still would walk and talk with men.

"Fear not, but trust. Around thee though unseen are those who live and minister and soon will find for thee a path to liberty."

A path to liberty? I knew not what it meant just then for I was lost to all my physical surroundings but when I awoke to my environments the full meaning of this pledge burst on me with the shock of revelation. A path to liberty? But how and when? Whether it was that I was enervated by suffering and could not see the difficulties in the way, or was so inspired by these hopeful words that my soul refused to recognize such difficulties as stone walls and iron bars, I know not, but I certainly believed the message true and as certainly did I look upon my deliverance as a question of time only. With me deliverance seemed a fact: the manifestation of that fact in my escape from the cell was the only thing I waited for.

I now approach a statement of my experiences which I should hesitate long before penning if this record were not necessary to account for my changed conditions.

My one excuse for recording it here is that, however, doubtful any possible theory of interpretation of this narrative may be, the facts back of it and underneath it are absolutely true. I shall not theorize—I shall not assume to know the true and only interpretation of the strange facts—I shall hold my mind open to future explanations if any may be found—but I will set down the facts. I shall state them as clearly and as accurately as I can.

I was wide awake and it was three o'clock in the morning for I had just counted the strokes of the city clock. I was lying on my pallet and my mind was quite at ease for a firm belief in coming deliverance had thrown its strength and blessing over all my being.

I heard a carriage drive along the gravelled walk and past the corridor in which I was confined. Then I heard the gate swing and a door open and close. Perhaps my hearing was at this time preternaturally acute: I know not, but I do know that in my dream trances it was often so.

Then I heard—or shall I say I sensed—a mingling

of voices in that part of the building where the jailer is accustomed to meet his visitors, and then the sounds ceased. I heard no words so as to distinguish them and the voices seemed far, far away and faint yet real, rather than a memory or an echo of some past experiences.

Soon my thoughts were attracted back to myself and I become conscious in a way that some one or something was in the cell and near me. My eyes strained through the gloom to the corner of the cell unconsciously locating the indefinable something that I felt rather than knew was there, unseen, unmanifested, yet surely there.

Then I saw a filmy, white nebulous something moving spirally upward. It had no definable shape but was full of movement and suddenly she—the woman of my dream vision, stood before me and said in tones that thrilled me "Come."

That is the last I know or remember save that I was dimly conscious of the passing of time. I was in company and we were moving on and on and on.

I recovered consciousness on the Wienowsky Bridge and found myself possessed of everything essential to the traveller, a grip containing clothing, money and provisions. I remembered it was but three miles further on to Huntville station and that the four-thirty express for New York would soon be due.

Making a few necessary changes in my attire I discarded some of my clothing and donned that which loving friends had evidently selected for me with care.

In a few days time and with the aid of the money so liberally supplied me, I had effected changes in my personal appearance somewhat marvellous, and under an assumed name I buried Herman Molson and all his sorrow and shame from the gaze of mankind and as Signor Guiseppi began my musical career in the great metropolis.

I am now fairly well established here and start in a few days with an orchestra I have organized to give concerts in various cities and towns.

I shall probably take in W——e but have no desire to revisit Ashton Hall.

I learn from Herbert, with whom I occasionally communicate and who pledges strictest secrecy, that my friends with few exceptions believe me dead.

It is well. Let the bitter pain and sorrow of my career in W——e be buried with the old name by which I was known beyond the possibility of a resurrection.

THE ROSE ARBOR ON CHESTNUT ISLAND.

(Herman Molson's Diary Continued.)

I have reached again the town of W——e, in our professional tour of the country. For a year I have sought to free myself as far as possible from the memories of the bitter past, yet I found it impossible to prevent my mind running over again the varied and attractive incidents in which I had played a part during my six months' clerkship and professional work in this quiet hamlet.

The stern and rugged character of the Banker and his singular power to fascinate the mind while his moral character shocked you, the winsome Lucille, a very incarnation of goodness, the beautiful Helena who won first my admiration for her grace and beauty while she repelled me by her lack of the womanly moral qualities, and then—as I learned to read her character more correctly, or as her character underwent a transformation—aroused within me that mad passion which threatened to rob me of reason and of life—all came back with a vividness and a reality that caused me to live over again the pain and pleasure of that memorable time.

I knew that I was on dangerous ground and that for my own peace and security I should forever forget and effectually blot out that six months' record of my life.

But with all my efforts I could not—in the atmosphere of that town—succeed and in the two days of my stay in W——e I passed in thought and feeling through every changing scene of the panorama of my W——e life experiences. My conferences with the Banker and Parish, my experiences at the Perkin's cottage, my denunciation of the Banker's dishonesty and cruelty, my visits to Ashton Hall and growing interest in my fair pupil, the discovery of my passion and my attempted flight, the quarrel with the Banker, the murder, the investigation, my imprisonment and disgrace—I lived them

all over in my room at the hotel and through the sleepless watches of my nights while there.

Strong as the temptation was to visit that part of the town, to catch a glimpse again of Mark Ashton, now so mysteriously restored to life, to look once more on the face that had been to me a vision of more than earthly beauty, I resisted all and summoned up my sense of pride and injury and bade myself curse the place, but my curses turned in some way into pitying blessings on my lips. Even my resentment against the Banker had been largely smothered in the tragedy that had fallen on him and on Ashton Hall. Into that dark tragedy had fallen also my dream of love and hope and now over the weary wastes of life there seemed before me one long, lonely journey, a steady plodding march, without the sunshine of companionship or the cheering music of friendly voices.

The past vision of happiness remained, a face and a form divinely fair, and that was all. A vision of love and beauty forever to be worshipped as we worship some distant and unapproachable star, but never to be incarnated into reality. Henceforth, life meant for me the silent worship of a Memory and a ceaseless devotion to a Muse.

As I walked down one of the old familiar streets by moonlight after the performance of our opera there stole over me the memory of those happy, hopeful days when as her teacher I was brought almost daily within sound of her sweet voice and the sight of her surpassing beauty. I found myself recalling with startling vividness the day —the "Perfect Day"—which in my Diary I attempted but failed to describe—which I spent with the young ladies of Ashton Hall upon Chestnut Island.

"Tomorrow" I said to myself, "I will take a boat and row up to the Island and spend a few hours living over again the joys and pleasures of that Perfect Day."

It was in vain that reason warned me that the more I revived these memories of a pleasant past, the bitterer would seem, on my awakening to present realities, my everyday sad and solitary life. I knew it all—but like the victim of the intoxicating cup I was willing to buy

a present gratification and pay largely for it in future sufferings. Let me be happy even in a Fool's Paradise for a few hours, I would pay the penalty gladly in future sorrow and penitence.

On the following morning I secured a boat and after a half hour's vigorous pull found the little cove of Chestnut Island and tying my boat was soon again upon that well-remembered spot.

It was a golden October morning and how clearly it recalled to mind and heart, as I trod the pathway to the vine-clad arbor, the experiences of a year before. What a contrast the memories of that day presented to my own sad and desolate present. It was like some supernal vision of indescribable beauty and joy that floats tantalizingly before the gaze of a desert traveller and vanishes, only to make the grim rocks and burning sands of his surroundings drearier and more desolate.

I knew the vision of a dead past was all that was left me yet I could not refrain: I must allow my imagination stimulated by these eloquent surroundings—every spot in this island had its voice and memory—to lead me through all the happy mazes of thought and feeling of my former visit.

I first traversed the island as I had a year before with my fair companions. As I did so each turn from my pathway, each new angle of vision, each fresh glimpse of the river, seemed alive with memories of the two breathing and beautiful women who a year before intoxicated my senses with their loveliness and charmed me with their words of wit and wisdom. They seemed near me, and at times I could recall accurately not only the words spoken but their very looks and gestures and even catch the intonations and cadences of their voices.

I came back and seated myself in the rose arbor by the river.

The solitude was charming to me and the mingled sounds of nature and animated life about me made up a chorus and a harmony that was soothing and restful. The main theme of the music seemed to be the low harmonies of the waters with occasional under-tones, and to this was added the singing of a gentle zephyr among

the leaves, while for variations there was an occasional pouring forth of joyful notes from the birds in the branches overhead, mingled with the chirp and twitter of the squirrels and insects. Nature was harmonious and beneficent and seemed to me to be saying, "Rest, my children, rest and be happy on my bosom. Be happy and sing for joy—for love reigns over all—the lays of sorrow and sadness pass away."

I was alone upon the island.

I took my violin, and tuning up its strings, I played a soft and sweet accompaniment to the mingled harmonies of nature.

Then I recalled how a year before under an inspiration that had come upon me from Helena's wonderful music I had told with my violin the story of my life.

Could I recall it? Yes, the circumstances were favorable, the environments were the same—or at least to my active imagination seemed so. I would try.

I started and I believe correctly reproduced the "Song of Rejoicing" and finishing it, paused a moment.

Then I gave—while memory painted again the thrilling scene of a year ago in the cottage on the hill with two hearers listening intently—"The Song of Childhood"—and then "Youthful Sorrows and Aspirations" and had just reached that part of my music story where I had interpreted for them my poem "Longing" when I heard as clearly, and distinctly as ever strains of music fell upon my ear, a repetition of my last passages, apparently from the cottage on the hill!

Astounded and excited, I stood trembling for a moment in silence.

Then in doubt whether my senses had misled me or I had really heard some answering strain to my own music, I struck the next part of the story on the violin.

Swift and clear came back each note of the passage I had given, from the cottage that crowned the hill above me.

Roused now to the deepest interest and thrilling with the excitement which this strange echo of my music had produced, wondering, questioning, hoping I knew not what, I pursued the story, line by line, pausing to listen

to the echo of my notes or the answer to them. I knew not which, only to hear them quickly vibrating on that clear October air from the cottage on the hill.

I was at once bewildered and beside myself with joy —bewildered for my senses had on various occasions apparently misled me. I had heard voices that I could not trace to any personality. I had seen faces, or thought I saw them, and when I looked again they had vanished.

Were these answering strains of music a delusion of my senses?

Or was Helena Ashton—and the thought intoxicated me with joy—on the island sending forth the notes that thrilled my inmost being?

Seizing my violin, which I had momentarily discarded I gave one more passage from the life story and as the answering notes from the cottage struck my ear, I had a renewal of a strange experience that has come to me at critical moments a few times before.

My right arm became benumbed and dead to all impulses of my own will. It utterly refused my own repeated volition. Then a smarting sensation passed over its surface from shoulder to hand and a prickling in the nerves and muscles, and suddenly it began to move swiftly to and fro, the bow leaping across the strings as though some other mind directed it and as entirely beyond my own control. At the same instant my lips uttered loud and clear the announcement of a new "Song of Joy."

And now there swept from the violin strings a vehement tide of melody which seemed to absorb all the mingled sounds of life about me. The instrument beneath this tumult of overmastering gladness throbbed and palpitated like a thing of life. I and the instrument seemed caught up in the mad rush and torrent of the music and swept on and on in such a whirl of wild and wilful gladness as I had never known before till, just as suddenly as it began, it stopped and almost lifeless with exhaustion, I sank upon my seat to wait and wait in vain an answer.

None came. But as I turned and gazed through the leafy arbor toward the cottage, the door opened and

Helena Ashton, or some divine vision of her, stood in the doorway.

She was clad in the same simple garb as the year before and on her head was a similar wreath of woven maple leaves with their beautiful blending of green and crimson and saffron and gold, and a single red rose upon her bosom.

She stood leaning against the door case with a look of mingled amazement, joy and fright upon her pale face, her large, lustrous eyes shining bright and clear as she peered through the shrubbery that half disclosed and half concealed the rose arbor from her view.

But only for a moment. Then she moved out, took a few rapid steps towards the arbor and paused, and holding her hand above her eyes as if to screen them from the sun and give her clearer view, she looked intently toward the arbor which hid me from her view. Then she advanced again, step by step, but not in direct approach, screening her eyes occasionally, pausing and advancing as though at times uncertain of herself or what to do, and thus the drew near the arbor while I, too much overcome by the excitement to advance, had seized the lattice frame and stood erect and breathless to catch the first clear view of her sweet face.

When first she saw me a low cry escaped her lips and with extended arms she started quickly to approach, but ere she reached the spot, she dropped her hands and shrank bank as though a maidenly modesty had restrained her. Then, after an instant's pause, finding words, she said:

"Herman Molson!" And in those words vibrated the surprise, wonder, joy and doubt with which her mind was filled.

"Helena Ashton," burst in glad joyous notes from my lips— and then we stood in silent wonder gazing into each other's faces.

"And you are still alive and well!" she said in pleased surprise and drawing nearer as she spoke. "They said the cruel river swallowed up my friend. I thought you dead and gone from us forever. Speak, speak, I want to hear your voice again."

"Yes, I am still alive and well as you can see—as much astonished as yourself at this most unexpected meeting."

"You seem to me," she said, her wondering gaze still fixed upon me, "like one come back from death to life. I almost fear to take your hand—and yet I will to satisfy this poor puzzled brain of mine."

And extending her hand I grasped it and laid it on my heart. But she withdrew it quickly and seemed ill at ease, and stood toying with the flower in her hand, refused my offered seat and looked upon the river, the woods, the arbor but not at me.

"Helena Ashton, what strange coincidence has brought you here today?" I asked.

She answered with a still averted face: "The memory of a joyful day spent here a year ago. The memory of a friend whom I valued highly for his worth. We thought a cruel fate had torn him from us forever!"

"And so you little thought to see him here—drawn to this very spot by a thousand sweet thoughts and memories of a year ago," I said.

She did not answer my question but went on as though she had not heard.

"He taught me how to make sweet sounds and harmonies upon the instrument and many lessons from his lips and life showed how—in time—I, too, might learn to make my life musical and sweet."

She said it simply, so naively and so unblushingly that my hopes sank near to despair. Surely she is grateful, I thought, for some real or fancied benefit, and her heart responds to that—but to no other chord.

And so my hope mounting high on outstretched wing a moment before, now fell dead to the earth again. I was then certain that she did not love me or she had not dared so openly and to my face to praise me, and my countenance fell.

She glanced toward me and seeing my dejected mien spoke again in lighter vein.

"And what excuse have you, Sir Knight, for trespassing on this private domain? How dare you disturb my maiden meditation? You startled me out of my worship

of a departed day and a departed friend? Come, sir, explain."

She was now so near me that I could see, with all her studied calm and earnest repression, beneath all her seriousness or playfulness, many indications in the quivering lip and downcast eye, of some strong excitement. She was deeply moved but from what cause I could not yet divine.

I begged her to be seated, but she still refused and kept moving to and fro as though uncertain of herself.

"My explanation is quite simple and my excuse is ready at hand," I said.

"This day one year ago threw charm and music over my whole life. Of all the pleasures I can recall, it has shone out clearly as the happiest memory of my life. All the events of those blissful hours we spent here one year ago have written themselves so deeply in my mind and heart and so frequently has my memory rehearsed every word and act, every emotion and thought of that glad day, that it shines out in the succeeding darkness and gloom of my poor life like a clear evening star in a heaven of blackness. Oh, Helena, dare I hope that you recall that day with equal pleasure? If I so believed, I would be the happiest man on earth. I———."

She gently disengaged her hand which I had grasped and turned her face away and said:

"But why come here?"

"I do not know," I replied, "I was led by some strange impulse to this spot. I felt sure the Island was deserted and thought I might indulge in solitude a harmless reverie of the happiest hours in all my life. Full well I knew how much darker and sadder the path before me would prove if I revived fully these sweet experiences—but I could not resist the temptation. I———."

"But tell me of yourself, good friend," she said. "And how you fare, and if the world is kind or cruel, and if you find the joy you merit. And are you happy?"

"Happy! Happy! Ah, yes,," I said bitterly, "I am happy—as the fainting traveller over burning sands who catches a vision of cooling waters and luscious fruits and sees the mirage fade away in obscurity. Happy, as the

captive longing in vain for air and sunshine and liberty. Happy as the exile banished from home and loved ones forever!"

I turned suddenly and caught her gaze fixed full on me and I wondered if the pity in her eyes was that of compassion or some deeper emotion. I continued: "Is the world kind or cruel?" you ask. "It matters not. Since first I woke from my dream of love and found its revelations in my heart one person makes the world to me. Her name makes constant music in my ear; her face shines ever before my eyes; her form and features express all earthly loveliness; her character represents to me the truth and beauty and goodness of the world. What care I now how the world treats me? A fig for the world and its cruel or kind treatment!

"Let me take her hand, hear her voice, share her love and heaven is mine—but without her, life means exile from hope, soul hunger unappeased, a living death!"

She turned her gaze from the woods to the river and remained silent.

"But tell me of yourself," I said impetuously. "Rumor tells me that shortly you will wed a prince and go afar from here. Is it true? And tell me, dare you, will you tell me, Helena, you are happy?"

She stood, swaying a little from side to side, uneasily, and when she turned her face for the first time full upon me it was radiant as I had never seen it before. A light was shining from the depths of her deep, dark eyes and playing in happy radiance over her face—a light I did not then understand.

"Yes," she answered joyously, "yes, the rumor's true. I soon shall wed a prince. And I am happy and supremely blest. My happiness lacks nothing in this hour to make it full and perfect except it be that my good friend I meet so unexpectedly seems sad and joyless.

"You will give me your good wishes, Mr. Molson, I am sure," and she extended her hand as if to receive my congratulations.

My heart and hope were dead within me as I turned to leave the arbor and like some wounded bird seek shelter in the solitude and bear my pain alone!

But she detained me, crossing my path with full intent, and with her wide extended arms barring my passage from the place.

"You will not leave me thus," she said. "I am your pupil, your grateful pupil. I shall never, never, forget you or your kindness. Surely you will bid a kind farewell at least, and a 'Heaven bless you' before you go and a blessing on the man I love."

"You have slain my hope," I cried. "You have shown me the gates of Paradise, then hurled me into the depths of darkness and despair! I cannot blame you that you do not love me, or that you love a prince. I will be just with you and him and wish you well. Though it is hard for human nature to extend joyful congratulations to a rival who has stolen from you the one in all the world you truly love, yet for your sake I will and do wish great joy to both of you. And now farewell—."

And still I sought to leave and still she barred the arbor door and led me back again.

"Ah, but if you knew this prince of mine," she said, "you surely would congratulate me on my choice—a man of royal soul and noble lineage and lofty purpose and one to whom my soul goes out ———."

"O spare me," now I cried, "the full description of his worth. I question not his lineage or his high estate or that he loves you. I question not his worth to hold your hand. You praise him highly—as no doubt you should. It's woman's privilege to praise the man she soon shall wed. Love sees but little fault in those beloved. For him the gates of Paradise—for me the lonely march over burning sands alone."

"Ah, that is most generous in you, my good friend," she cried cheerily, as if she verily enjoyed the pain suffered at that hour. "Yet you do faint justice to the man I love. For he as far exceeds all words of praise that I can give him and his love for me as far surpasses all description as the sun outshines the faintest star. If you but knew his worth you would congratulate me a thousand times and know what cause I have for joy."

I must have been impatient in my manner and was

starting forth again to leave the place with some short words of farewell on my lips when she caught my hand in hers and urged me to a seat.

"Not in anger, not in anger," she cried. "You would not thus leave the pupil you have taught, whose life you have enriched with music and with truth! I cannot bear in this our parting to have a good friend so grieve me! Surely you do wish me well and pray that I may profit by the words of wisdom you have given me and the lessons of your life!

"Do you remember, Mr. Molson, that in one of the lessons which your kind teacher taught you and which you in turn taught us, Mrs. Williams says, 'love asks only the happiness of the object loved. It forgets self and seeks only the welfare of the beloved.'

"If you truly love me—as you claim you do—will you not daily pray for my happiness and for him I love? Will you not rise to that noble self-forgetfulness and daily bless me and the man I love with your good thoughts?"

"Ah, me!" I cried, "I never, never till this hour saw that lesson thus applied!"

"Most truly should it be," she answered, "that is, if you truly love me as you say you do. But did you say it? No. You only left me to infer it as by logic from your speech, to draw by slow and intellectual process this cold conclusion from your words. Ah, me! what a poor, poor lover you would make! Now were I a lover, seeking for a maiden's hand and did I truly love her I would give no dubious speech, no formal logic in my words, but my heart should speak out loud and clear a language which she and all who heard should understand. I would tell it to the listening plants and trees, and breathe it in the perfume of the flowers, pour it forth through every flowing stream, utter it in the winds and put such melody and music, such pathos and power in my speech that I would melt the hardest heart to burning love!"

"Now you are cruel and mock me with your words," I cried. "Not all the eloquence of which you speak can make the iceberg warm or turn cold marble into flesh.

Did I possess all this eloquence of which you speak would it cause an empty vision of some distant Paradise to satisfy me when I am forever shut out? Or would it satisfy the exiled soul to say, 'Heaven bless you' to those entering in while he himself remains in darkness and despair? You mock me in my misery."

"Not so, not so," she cried. "I did but ask the teacher to apply in his own case the lesson taught his pupil. I only asked your daily prayer for me and him I love."

"Yes, I will try," I answered, "hard as it seems—to forget my dream of love and happiness—and daily pray that you and he may be richly dowered with joy. But it is no easy task for one like myself to reach such heights. I would not play the hypocrite and I confess it rends my heart with anguish to be thus near you—too look upon your charms—and know you never can be mine. So I will go at once—Good-bye."

I was going forth again to escape her speech which pierced my soul and brought me an agony of pain words never can describe.

"I cannot bear to see you suffer so, my good, kind friend," she said and placed her hand in mild restraint upon my arm. "You have not even asked the name of him I love, nor where he lives, nor what his looks, nor of his speech or manner."

"It matters not," I said, "his family name, and residence are naught to me. They only remind me of one who has no home, no family and few friends and goes forth hopeless and alone in life."

"Now, Mr. Molson, if you truly love as you say you do, how can you be indifferent to the man I am to wed. Ah, if you but knew him and my great wealth of love and his great worth a very royal soul, a real kingly man——."

I had risen up quickly. Hope was dead within me. Blinded and bewildered by her praise of him she loved I started again, to leave the arbor. A speechless agony robbed me of all utterance. I had seized my violin—my one true friend—and pushing rudely past her as she stood, with a hoarse farewell on my lips was stepping from the arbor when I heard a little cry of pain and the single word, "Herman!"

And as I turned to see what caused her pain or fright, her two arms were about my neck, her cheek pressed close to mine, and as I caught the vision of her face, the crystal drops of grief hung trembling on the lashes of her wondrous eyes.

"The dream! The dream!" I cried. "My dream comes true. Thank Heaven at last—I hold you in my arms of love—fast and safe, my love at last."

"Herman, dear Herman," she whispered. "You did not ask me who my prince was—so I must tell you as I do now" and she kissed me on the forehead, as she said in low, sweet tones, "you are my prince, my king, the one man in all this world I truly love."

"The dream comes true," I cried. "This day has brought me love and beauty and exceeding joy."

"It is even better than the day we came to celebrate," she whispered shyly.

"And could you not guess, Herman dear, all I meant but dare not say? Do you not know how hard it is at first for woman's lips to say what I now say so boldly, I love you?"

"But, Oh, your cruel words," I cried. "They pierced my very soul, killed all my hope and mocked me in my misery. How could you make me suffer so?"

"I know not why I wrung your heart with so much grief," she answered—"unless my heart was hungry still to see some further test and proof of your great love for me, and hear some new confession from your lips.

"When I first heard the music from your bow it set me trembling like an aspen leaf in summer wind. I seized my own and sent the quivering answer out. Then I listened with my soul intent to make sure I did not mistake the fancies of my brain for joyous truth. And as I followed strain on strain the story of your life, hope grew within me. You were alive and here upon the island.

"I cannot tell you what exceeding joy took hold of my poor heart when I first realized that fact. And when I heard your soul go out on that great burst of joyful recognition, I felt that I must seek you—must find you—must even tell you all the wealth of my great love since

first in Ashton Hall your words awoke me to a knowledge of myself.

"I started out, so frightened, so agitated, so full of joy, with mingled hope and fear, I hardly know how I reached the arbor or your side.

"When first I saw you I ran quickly on with full intent to tell you all my love, but something held me back, and in place of bringing joy I brought you agony and despair—but in all of this I suffered even more than you. I fought my love and held it back and tortured you, my prince, forgive me!"

"Yes, a thousand times most gladly I will forgive you since for every passing pain you give me now ten thousand deeper joys," I answered her.

"And then I was restrained by the very greatness of my love," she continued. "Here stood my teacher, and my friend whose words and life had been the mirror in which I saw my poor empty life—and seeing, learned to hate. Here stood one from whom I learned the nobler views of life and duty—a man who loved and loved most truly yet was nobly silent, bearing all his pain in secret, because much as he loved me he loved his honor more. So when I stood beside him and beheld a manly man—who feared not the great, pitied the unfortunate, faltered not at duty's call, spoke no flattering lies and loved to his high sense of truth, the man who won the kingdom of my heart and reigned supreme, I could not force my lips to speak. Did I do wrong to call him prince!"

"You shame me with such words of praise," I cried. "Ah, stupid fool was I, I could not read the riddle of your speech. But now your face is as an open book in which I scan the sweetest story ever writ—but sweeter a thousand times when your own dear lips have told it."

"My life shall tell this story over again to you each day," she said. "And every passing hour shall add some witchery to the tale. And at Ashton Hall———."

"Never, Never!" I cried in an agony of fear and dread.

Then there first burst upon me a full revelation of

what I had done. For till that moment, intoxicated with my dream of love, my memory had been sleeping. Now at the mention of Ashton Hall came back all the bitter, bitter days of trial and suffering, my quarrel with the Banker and his burning words still rankling in my soul. And with this recollection, the teachings of my father and my repeated pledges to preserve my honor and my freedom from the curse of gold, especially of gold wrung by oppression from the poor.

"Oh, Heaven, forgive me!" I cried, "that should so soon and easily forget my father's solemn counsel, or Mark Ashton's scorn, or my own vows.

"We are torn apart again—by my dead father's arms and between us rises up a wall of gold, Mark Ashton's gold. Never," I cried, "much as I love you, dearer than life as you are to me, will I enter Ashton Hall or touch one dollar of his cursed gold!"

"And is that all that separates us?" she meekly said. "If so, dear Herman, you little know of woman's love and of what a woman's love can do. Trifling things at the very best are wealth and palace halls and gold and gems —when hearts are in the balance. My love can sweep these baubles from our future path as the mountain torrent sweeps aside the driftwood into quiet eddies and rushes on unimpeded to the open sea!

"Am I too rich? Then I'll be poor and don an apron and a servants' cap so I may serve attendance on a king. Love laughs at caste, steps over social lines, tramples on little trifles like a banker's gold or coronets, and sings his song as sweetly in a rose arbor as in palace halls. Herman, freely, joyfully, I renounce my wealth since I can never be poor with all the wealth of your love. By your side I'll make the humblest cottage so rich in beauty and so full of joy we'll never know the change from wealth to poverty!

"Do you know, dear Herman, that charming little poem, 'My Ship,' by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, who sings divinely in the praise of love? Let me recite it—for my speech is poor—while this in words and meaning is most wondrous sweet.

'If all the ships I have at sea,
Should come a-sailing home to me,
Weighed down with gems and silks and gold—
Ah, well! the harbor could not hold,
So many sails as there would be,
If all my ships came in from sea.

'If half my ships came home from sea,
And brought their precious freight to me,
Ah, well! I would have wealth as great
As any king who sits in state—
So rich the treasures that would be,
In half my ships now out to sea.

'If just one ship I have at sea,
Should come a-sailing home to me,
Ah, well! the storm clouds then might frown,
For if the others all went down,
Still rich and proud, and glad I'd be,
If that one ship came home to me.

'If that one ship went down at sea,
And all the others came to me,
Weighed down with gems and wealth untold,
With glory, honor, riches, gold,
The poorest soul on earth I'd be,
If that one ship came not to me.

'O skies, be calm! O winds, blow free,
Blow all my ships safe home to me!
But if thou sendest some a-wrack,
To never more come sailing back,
Send any, all that skim the sea,
But bring my love ship home to me.

"Many an hour in my lonely chamber when I mourned you dead I thought that 'that one ship' had gone down at sea and my heart and hope had gone down with it, and then I thought how joyfully I could say:

'If that one ship came home to me.
Still rich and proud, and glad I'd be.'

"Now since that one ship of love with its precious cargo has come into our harbor we shall never miss them if the others all go down at sea. Love will laugh away the little difficulties your fears have conjured up. All homes however humble are palaces if love dwells within. Has not Mrs. Williams taught us: Love makes the world go round, transforms all baser metals to gold, all characters into the divine. There can be no heaven without love, and there can be no hell in any realm, dear Herman, save in a loveless life."

During all these words of love and beauty I sat as one entranced, in a speechless maze of happiness and joy, and drinking in the wondrous beauty of her face now glowing with the light of fond affection and listening to the music of her voice. It seemed to me that Paradise had opened wide its gates and my soul entered.

"Come to the cottage, Herman," she said, "I'll spread a royal feast and you shall have the place of honor. You shall tell me a thousand times—O, what a poor lover you are in speech, Herman,—all that is in your heart this hour."

And so we walked the winding path again and entered the room where a year before so much of joy and gladness had been crowded into the merry, circling hours.

Of how she donned her apron, and how she spread the snowy napery again, and how she brought forth delicate and delicious viands from the hamper, and how she looked, and spoke by words and glance and gesture and bewitching grace all the sweet, overmastering passion of her heart, I could not now speak.

I tasted of the food, but mostly sat as one entranced, and gazed and listened as one might sit abashed at some heavenly banquet, hearing something all too sweet and wonderful to be believed and wondering still if it were real and true.

The hours sped away. The full moon had risen. Nature was hushed to evening's calm and as we launched our little craft upon the river, ten thousand reflections of the moonbeams danced on the wavelets of the flowing tide. The moon cast a silvery pathway of radiance across the river as we glided peacefully down the stream.

I ceased rowing and allowed the boat to drift with the current and we sat part of the way in silence, drinking in the beauty of the scene, living over again the glad hours we had just passed through and finding no words to fit the thoughts and emotions of the hour.

"Herman," she said, assuming a listening attitude, as we neared the town, "listen! Do you not hear the sound of voices of great melody, as though coming from a great distance, over the sea, voices of song and gladness, far away, but songs of wondrous sweetness?"

"Yes, my love," I said, "I hear them. They are angel songs, coming over the once stormy billows. We have been tossed about on the angry crest of these fierce waves, as I saw in my dream, back and forth, passing and repassing each other, in the darkness. Now the storm has passed. We are nearing the harbor and the angels of peace and hope are singing of joyful days to come."

"And do you not hear other songs, as well?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied, "but the other songs are all within my own soul. It would seem as if ten thousand song birds had just waked up and were singing in my heart."

HAPPENINGS AT ASHTON HALL.

JOHN GILBERT HUME.

As to what occurred at Ashton Hall immediately after the meeting of Mr. Molson and Miss Ashton on Chestnut Island, described in the preceding chapter taken from Mr. Molson's Diary, I have, fortunately, a circumstantial account in a letter from Miss Lucille to Mrs. Williams which Mrs. Williams gave me permission to use after obtaining the writer's consent.

As it gives a view of matters within Ashton Hall and much fuller and more life-like than any outsider could have written, I offer no apology for its use here. Since it chiefly concerns the heiress and her proffered giving up of her position and wealth, I have chosen to give it a separate heading and shall call it

"THE RENUNCIATION."

My Loving Friend:

As events of great importance to us all are happening in Ashton Hall and elsewhere, and I cannot get away for one of our delightful visits, much as my heart prompts thereto, I must write you some account of what will be, I know, most delightful news.

To begin with Herman Molson, let me say your prophecy again proves correct. Oh, joy, joy indescribable was mine, when Mr. Jaffery came last week and gave us positive proof that he is alive and well, and strange to say, was shortly to appear in W——e. He has discarded his old name, and is touring the country with the Mendelssohn Quartette and Orchestra as Signor Guiseppi. Last week they gave two concerts in Orion Hall and I was there. He has changed, and yet is much the same, but in his music there is the same weird power of touching the heart and setting all the chords of one's inner nature into that pathetic vibration we all know and loved so well when he was with us.

My father and I went and you may be sure we were among his most interested hearers. Oh, how I wished to go to him and confess the wrong I had done him, the injury he had received at our hands and beg forgiveness, but my father and Mr. Jaffery both said, "Not yet. All in good time you shall see him and make peace with him. Only wait."

Helena did not attend the concerts and I was bidden to hold my peace about Mr. Molson until events were ripe for further action. She seems to have lost interest in the public concerts and in her own music, except the violin, the practice on which she has kept up faithfully and on which she is now a delightful performer. On the day following the first concert she was up earlier than usual and surprised us all by announcing she would spend the day upon the Island in reading and practice, and so a boatman was engaged to carry her lunch and convey her to the Island. She bade him to come for her again at five o'clock.

At six the boatman returned with a strange story. He had gone back expecting to find Miss Ashton ready for her return trip, but had been surprised to find another boat moored to the landing and to hear a strange sort of musical dialogue going on between the rose arbor and the cottage. He told the story to father and myself, and yet I don't know that I can give you Mr. Flannery's exact words or do justice to his pronunciation, but it resembled this:

"When I got forninst the Island, I heard a low, soft strain of fiddle music, like as if a bird was calling to its mate, only it was louder and more like the human voice, but full of tender feeling and pity. Whist, I says to myself, I'll investigate. So I rowed my boat behind the little headland, near the landing, and could look through the trees and see and hear all that occurred.

"Presently I heard another bit of music, just the same, from the cottage on the hill, the same identical words and sentiments, though it was all music, you understand, but the music was so full of meaning that I call it words. Then another bit of music from the arbor, but this time it was sad and low and had so many

sobs and breaks in it that my heart came into my throat, and I felt as if all my friends had deserted me forever. Then the same sentiments was sent back down from the cottage. Then the next time it was different, so ilivating that I stood up to hear it and I felt that I could face my inimies and conquer them, and feared neither man nor divil.

"And so the music wint—back and forth—high and low—sad and glad, but mostly sad, until suddenly I heart a great burst of music like a thousand hallelujahs all at wonst, like as though all the birds were singing in chorus, then all at wonst it stopped. I moved my boat a little and then I could see into the rose arbor and there stood a tall gintleman, grasping his fiddle in one, hand and peerin' through the lattice of the arbor up to the cottage.

"Aha, my foine gintleman intruder, I'll keep my eye on you, says I, some furriner, I thought, but I couldn't tell for the life of me how he had learned our English music so well and could speak it so perfectly.

"Prisintly I saw the cottage door open and Miss Ashton appeared, very pale and excited, her eyes full of fright and fear, I thought, and then she started down the hill, her long tresses flying in the wind and putting her hands over her eyes, like this, as though frightened, yet not afraid, running and pausing and then walking round and round, looking toward the cottage as though she didn't know whether it was a friend or inimy she might meet. I rowed a little closer, not liking to trust these furriners too much, especially when they look like gintlemen.

"I saw them when they met, and it was a strange meeting. As soon as she saw him her face was all aglow and she run to meet him—she must have thought she recognized him at first—but stopped and half turned back, then she gave her hand to him, timid like and shy, and he seemed more afraid than she. He offered her a seat, but she stood and talked to him and looked out at the river and up at the tree tops and around the Island and he talked so differently at different times—now fast,

now slow, then high, and low, and sometimes so hoarse and low, I thought he had lost his voice intirely.

"Whatever t'was they talked about she kept her temper much better than he did. Whether she ordered him off the Island, I don't know, or whether she only remonstrated, civil-like with him, a furriner breaking the law, I don't know, but he, poor wretch, seemed to feel his situation most keenly.

"Three or four times she got him started off the arbor, and then, woman-like, she kept him back, probably giving him a word of warning about the future. But he lost his temper intirely several times and acted like a crazy man—walking up and down the arbor excited-like and running his hands through his hair and talking in such hoarse tones. I did not hear him swear, but I think mostly likely he did. Them furriners use bad language, so they do.

"Why didn't I call out, or make myself known? Because, I am mortal sure they wished to have the quarrel out themselves. They were both so interested, too, I don't believe they would have heard me had I cried Murder! Whatever 'twas they talked about I'm sure they were so engaged they would not have heard an earthquake or a peal of thunder. I thought, then, I'd come down and report to you, Mr. Ashton, and if you think best I'll get a policeman or two and go back and take him prisoner."

My father only smiled and said we'd wait and see.

About eight o'clock Helena came in the walked directly to her room, and I, all curiosity and excitement, followed, but she had locked the door. After a few pleadings she opened the door and let me in but kept her face turned from me. When I attempted to see her face, she turned the light off and caught me in her arms and kissed me. Then I know she had seem him, but I kept the knowledge to myself and said, "How late you are! And what queer news is this we hear about a stranger on Chestnut Island?"

"Lucille, my dear Lucille, I don't know how to tell you of to-day. Herman lives, and I"ve seen him, I've

given him all my heart. I am so happy words mock me when I try to tell."

What could I do but press her to my heart and share her joy and wish her ten thousandfold her present bliss. I turned on the light again and then I read the story in her face.

But none of us are perfect, are we, Auntie Williams? Even in my exciting happiness over Herman's return and Helena's gladness, that strain of mischief in my nature showed itself and there stole into my mind the thought of annoying and teasing my sweet sister for a time, that I might gladden her heart again at last.

So I feigned a sadness that I did not feel, and sighed, and made my face belie my heart and cried: "Alas! Alas! I thought that Herman loved me—I thought he returned my affections!"

Helena sprang from her seat, her face wore a pained and sorrowful aspect, and such a look of grief came to her large dark eyes as she kissed me and said, "And do you, too, love Herman?"

"Yes, I love him!" I cried. "I love the ground he walks upon. I love him with such true and deep affection that it would take my life to be separated from him again. Did you not know my love for Herman? I'm sure he loves me."

"Most surely I did not, but Herman loves no one but me. I'm sure he loves no one but me," she said. Yet with it all I saw from her face that she was greatly disturbed with the thought of my suffering and insidious doubt of Herman's love.

Then I withdrew my frowns and let the sun shine forth in my face and my voice ring out in happy laughter, and I embraced her again and again and drove all sadness away until no happier sisters ever spent the night together than Helena and myself.

It was long, long past midnight when she had finished telling me the story of their chance meeting, and of the wonderful interview that followed. When she had finished she put her arms around me as in the old days of our trouble and bereavement and sobbed rather than spoke the words: "He cannot come to me—so I shall

go to him and to-morrow I will tell Papa Ashton my decision."

I begged her to explain and then she said: "You know, my dear, what Herman thinks of Papa Ashton. You know how he detests avarice, covetousness and dishonesty and all of these, Alas! Alas! he thinks he finds them all in your father and my dearest friend. Then he inherits from his father a fear of unearned gold—and smarts still under the taunts your father uttered in this Hall. He never will touch a dollar of Mark Ashton's money nor will he enter Ashton Hall, and so, as poor as I was when I came to you, as poor will I go forth again. Lucille, my constant and truest friend, be with me and help me through tomorrrow. It will cost me much to tell my benefactor that I must leave him—and you—and renounce his offered wealth—and choose one whom he does not yet admire or love. Oh, if Heaven would only make friends of these two men my earthly cup of joy would then be full!"

And then it was my turn to comfort her and so I said:

"How strangely things have turned about within the last few months! A few months since we mourned both men as dead. Now happily we know they are alive and well. May we not trust good angels to smoothe away whatever misunderstandings still exist. Let me turn prophetess, Helena dear, and declare I see bright omens in your sky. I know two better, truer men, of nobler mind and mold walk not the earth tonight, and I prophesy that in another month, two men more loving and affectionate with each other—with more of true appreciation for each other's worth—will not be found on earth."

"I bless you for those words of hope"—she meekly said.—"I pray kind Heaven to grant me this one boon and I will dedicate my life to noble deeds."

Next morning I was up with the lark and told my father all the joyful news before Helena awoke.

He listened as one entranced, bewildered, overwhelmed with joy too deep and full to find words for expression. And as step by step I narrated the meeting

of the lovers, the course of their conversation, the alternate hope and despair of Herman, the womanly deception which Helena practised before she confessed her love, and then Helena's wish to give back all her wealth and prospects for her lover's empty hand, he rose and paced the floor his bosom swelling with such a tide of deep emotion as I had never yet seen upon him—motioning with his hand for silence—till he could command his voice.

"My dear Lucille," he said at last—"no romance of the stage surpasses in thrilling effects, your simple story. The time, the place, the circumstances, the speech and the action, I doubt not—were full of deep dramatic power. Would that some wizard word weaver could put the facts in story. Would that some great actor who can read and then portray the deep emotions of the heart, could put upon the stage a scene like that on Chestnut Island yesterday! Ah, I would travel round the world to see it. Think of it—our Herman and Helena, the chief actors in the scene.

"Thank Heaven, they stood the fiery test and out of the crucible come forth as gold purified." He ceased speaking. I looked up at his face. It shone as I can only imagine would shine the face of an angel. Then suddenly he left the room.

Helena was silent at the breakfast table. Indeed the conversation lagged and when we rose she took my father's arm and mine and led us to the library and seating us in two adjoining chairs sat down upon a stool and took a hand of each, and tried to speak, but failed at first until my father laid his hand upon her head and said "My child, speak out, don't be afraid. You surely know our love. Speak fully, frankly all that is in your mind and heart."

"How can I speak?" she said. "You have been to me more than father—my benefactor and the friend of my early days. What I must say will sever loving hearts and rob me of a father, you of a child. It is like the pain of death to tell you, I must go from you—and from Ashton Hall—and turn my back on all your offered kindness and good will.

"I have so much to tell—so much that is hard to tell—and my poor words will not express my meaning. Your love for me must give me strength and courage.

"Most of all I dread is this: you may think me unmindful of your love and goodness all these years. And of your most generous purpose to bestow on me your wealth and make me great in all the world calls great. I prize it all—but most of all the love that prompted it and your kind patience with me and with all my faults.

"But now, I must tell my decision. I cannot take the wealth you offer me. I cannot remain in Ashton Hall, nor, can I try to carry out your great designs for me.

"I am so changed, so different from what I once was, I hardly know myself. It would seem as if before this year I had been dreaming idle dreams and now I've just waked up and learned to know myself and my sorroundings, and to find what things are true and real and what things are false and fleeting. I seem like one re-born—the old Helena died a year ago and since that hour new thoughts, new aims, new hopes, new ideals have come to me and I am changed—so changed. My nobler self has waked up to life.

"You ask me what has changed me. I will tell. It was my coming into touch with one, true, simple life—my music teacher—your poor clerk—with whom I am most pained to say you were not pleased and he, in turn, thinks ill of you. This makes the pain of my going forth still harder for me—that I should choose one whom you cannot choose. love one whom you cannot love, yet I do love him with a love so full and true that I can leave this Hall without one real regret, save for the loving hearts I leave behind.

I ask that all you once intended me to have, you give to this dear girl, my sister, and that I may go forth as poor and penniless as I came to Ashton Hall—yet I shall be the richest, happiest woman on the earth."

Then father rose and taking her hand in his, gently said, "Be comforted, dear child, it shall be as you wish. You have made your choice. It is well."

And so Helena goes to Herman. May they be happy.

Lucille Ashton.

THE PEACEMAKER.

From Herman Molson's Diary.

On the afternoon of the day following my visit to Chestnut Island, I was surprised to receive from the message boy of the Hotel Traymore, a note from Miss Lucille Ashton, begging a brief interview with me in one of the ladies parlors. The envelope was addressed to Signor Guiseppi but the note began, "My dear Mr. Molson" and was courteously and kindly worded and intimated that matters of grave importance to me and others depended on this meeting.

I found her—after the most sorrowful and eventful months that had rolled by since last we met—the same, gentle, loving and good-humored girl I had known before. Had I had cause or purpose of resentment in my heart toward her, it surely would have melted in the glow of her kindness and her smiles. But whatever wrong I had suffered at the hands of Mark Ashton, I never had anything but justice and kindness from Lucille.

As I came into the room where she sat, the memory of the dark days that had come to her, to me and to Ashton Hall seemed to pass like a cloud over her face, but the sun shone instantly as she took my hand and her face and eyes more than supplemented the kindness of her words as she said:

"Surely, I have not done you wrong in assuming you would drop disguises with one who has ever sought to be your true friend, Mr. Molson?"

I thanked her and after we were seated she handed me at once a note from the master of Ashton Hall. It read as follows:

Dear Mr. Molson:

May I beg of you before you leave the city to give me an opportunity of explaining to you and a few interested friends some things in my past life which may make my conduct less detestable in your sight.

Not that I would justify myself—but I am sure your sense of right will not refuse me this privilege of mitigating, if I cannot entirely remove, the severe condemnation you and others—I will not say unjustly—passed upon my conduct.

These lines are from one who has passed life's meridian, the shadows of whose journey are rapidly falling toward the east, and from one who has arisen from the darkness of the tomb to take, perhaps, a nobler and a truer view of life! Will you come again to Ashton Hall and hear my explanations?

MARK ASHTON.

As I read the letter a wonderful emotion came over me. Do letters bear with them, I often ask myself, in their atmosphere, the thought and feeling of the writer? It seemed as though while reading that letter the depths of my being were stirred. A feeling of infinite tenderness, divine compassion, came over me. In that instant all resentment, all harsh judgment, all bitterness were swallowed up in this sense of pitying love for men, and I could not have cherished a harsh thought toward the Banker at that hour to save my own life.

Lucille, who was by this time all smiles and radiance, saw my emotion but chose to ignore it. Moving her seat near to mine, she said:

"I have come as peace-maker. Surely it is a heavenly mission. Do you wish me success?"

"It would be cruelty itself," I replied, "if I did not wish success to so holy a mission and if I refused my aid to so noble a missionary. Since reading that note my heart is very pitiful toward all, and I remember all too well, how much I, too, need forgiveness."

"Now you have made me very happy by your words," she said. "And soon it will be the privilege of others to add much to your joys."

And so it was settled that on the following evening I was again to revisit Ashton Hall and meet the Banker.

THE DAY OF REVELATION.

Herman Molson's Diary.

W——e, Oct.—— 18——.

As arranged with Miss Lucille, I spent this evening at Ashton Hall, and was delightfully surprised to find present most of my friends whose names have figured in these Diary pages, as well as all the members of the Ashton household. I was especially pleased to find the Williams family and Mrs. Perkins and her children there, and to realize the harmony of thought and sentiment that, like a subtle sense of perfume, pervaded the place.

The Banker himself met me at the door and taking my arm escorted me to the drawing room. The members of the Williams family and the widow Perkins with her beautiful children made the group very congenial, while the young ladies of Ashton Hall, dispensing with formal greetings, each in simple earnest words told me how pleasant it was to see me within their home again.

The company was indeed a memorable one. There sat Mrs. Williams, my foster mother, my one true and tried friend, my spiritual teacher and guide, to whom I owed more than to all others combined. She had a look of serene happiness and joyful anticipation on her face. Beside her, cheerful, confident and happy, sat that royal-souled man, her husband and life-long lover. At her feet on footstools at either side sat Lucille and Helena. At the opposite end of the drawing room another group, Mark Ashton being the central figure, while near him sat Laura and Maude Williams, while Herbert and the Perkins family occupied the centre of the room.

The Banker was strikingly like the Mark Ashton I had known—yet different noticeably both in appearance and manner. He was pale in face and slightly thinner in form and more subdued in manner, yet the impression of hidden depths of power and feeling within him

was never stronger I think upon any observer's mind than on that evening.

Miss Lucille was radiant with the love light of her affections and forcibly brought back to memory the days of unexplained happiness she passed through just before the dire tragedy. During the recital of her father's strange story she sat with eyes riveted upon his face reflecting as the narrative proceeded the liveliest interest sympathy and affection.

On Miss Ashton's face there was during the Banker's recital a look of deepest curiosity changing to awe and wonder, kindling at times into devout admiration at particular passages in the story.

I sat where I could view both groups, a link between the two home circles, and watched the play of emotion upon the Banker's face and on the faces of his auditors as he proceeded with his wonderful story. It would be impossible to express in cold statements of mine, the easy grace, charming diction and dramatic power of Mark Ashton, or to portray the tides of emotion that at times swept over him and thrilled every one who heard his words.

Once and once only did his feelings fully overcome him: It was when he alluded to his wife who was the good angel of his life and must have been a woman of great beauty and purity of character—her name and memory having been worshipped in the temple of his heart for nearly a score of years.

Here his voice gave way and after a moment or two of silence he asked me to render on my violin, "Home, Sweet Home," with my own variations.

After I had done so, there stole over all of us a stillness and peace that hushed all our minds and hearts into serenity and for a time we sat in a silence more eloquent even than the Banker's words, a silence that was holy.

And sitting thus, with varying thought and emotions, we who had played our little part in the drama of the last eventful year, listened to the story of a life unique in character and purpose and disclosing principles and aims quite out of the ordinary experiences of men.

There was no prologue or introduction of any kind.

Every one knew the peculiar object of the gathering. Every one expected to learn something explanatory of the Banker's life and character. So, without exordium of any kind, Mark Ashton gave his statement.

MARK ASHTON'S STORY.

"Our family history can be traced back from the rugged hills of Maine, where I and my three brothers were reared, through successive generations to Plymouth Rock, to the times of the Mayflower and to the heart and brain of the Puritans: but it is my own life story I will tell, a story known in part to my tried and true friends, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, yet only in part even to them, and almost a sealed volume to my younger friends of today.

"With my darling daughter Lucille here—whose love and confidence and comradship have been my mainstay and without whose support I could never have accomplished the task I set my hand to—I have had no secrets. She is the only one in all the world who has read my heart fully, entered into my plans and purposes with enthusiasm and before whom I was not compelled to act a part. To the rest of the world I have been, for the last five years particularly, an actor, speaking at times sentiments which my soul abhorred, sentiments vile and abominable to some of you, puzzling my daily associates and the public with eccentricities and apparently contradictory conduct, and hiding what little of grace and charity my soul may have acquired zealously from the world.

"My eldest brother, Luke, after my father's death, became at twenty-one a man of wealth. He had partially completed his college education and was summoned home to find himself fatherless and rich by inheritance. The bulk of the property—my mother having passed away five years before—went to him and he was left executor of the estate, then amounting to over one hundred and sixty thousand dollars, with instructions to pay over our respective apportionments as we reached our majority. Within the next four years he had spent his entire for-

tune and trenched upon the smaller allowances of the younger brothers. He plunged headlong into dissipation, abandoned his college course and in a few years became a victim of strong drink, ending his days in an asylum.

"My brother, Samuel, undeterred by Luke's fate, took his smaller portion and entered upon a fast life in Boston. He was killed in a gambling den in that city a few years after Luke's death.

"John from early life showed qualities quite distinct from Luke and Samuel. He was a born miser. From childhood his selfish propensities seemed to govern him in a peculiar degree and when he, too, received his fortune, he gravitated to our own country town and lived—if such a life can be called living—till a few years ago solely for the irrational purpose of acquiring money. He did not seem to care for its use—it was its possession—the insatiable greed of possession, that, like a deadly cancer in the system, consumed his better instincts and emotions and poisoned all the currents of his being.

"Let me mark for you the stages of his tragic descent into the hell of the miser—the inferno into which souls gravitate upon whom the curse of gold in this form has fallen.

"At thirty-five John was possessed of about one hundred thousand dollars—he married early and, I think, for gold—and had a wife and two children. While always parsimonious and mean in his family expenditure, up to this time his family had been able to present a decent appearance at home, in the social circle and they went to church on Sunday in a carriage.

"Ten years pass. John's fortune has more than doubled, but with it—Oh, Cursed Lust of Gold!—his love of money, his greed for gain, his penuriousness and niggardliness to his family have increased—a hundred fold. John is now no longer able to furnish a carriage for his family to ride in—nor suitable clothing—nor scarcely a sufficiency of food for his larder. While his wealth is growing in leaps and bounds, his covetousness has outstripped his wealth and so mean and shabby and miserly is his treatment of wife and children that the neighbors

take pity on them and help them secretly to money and clothing. This killed his wife—she died as many a woman dies—for want of love and kindness. Oh, if the tombstones told truth—in place of monstrous falsehoods—many an epitaph would read: "Died from Soul Starvation;" "Killed by Cruelty;" "Murdered by Neglect."

"The two children left him. He sold his home, converted it into money and set his gold dollars to chasing other gold dollars into his net.

"Look at him at fifty-five—worth nearly half a million—yet too poor to maintain a house or home. He goes into a cheap tenement and boards himself. He is now as shabby and dirty as a beggar. All sense of decency as to his appearance and life has left him. His scruples as to right and wrong are utterly abandoned. Yet he is a developed product of our civilization, the species miser, genus money-grabber, and will take advantage of a poor neighbor, turn the widow and orphan into the street and reaps his largest harvest from poor farmers who in spring time are in need of grain and food, and must secure the same to insure a harvest for the season. I have learned of his charging as high as five per cent per month and exacting it with merciless rigor.

"He was taken sick. A day before he died the doctor called on him and he cried out in agony, "What'll be your charge for that medicine?" and when he learned it was some trifling amount he screamed in real soul anguish—so the poor neighbor woman who came in out of charity to attend him, informed me,—"Oh, you wretched extortioners, you would ruin a man with your charges." Next day on a miserable pallet, with insufficient clothing, he died clutching in either hand a bag of gold.

"Do you wonder then these lessons were burned upon my soul in letters of fire by my family's history?

"When I received my small portion of the old estate, at twenty-one, I took a solemn vow that I would stand for manhood and for true living—and uphold the family honor in my life.

"I prospered—it is a family trait we have of making

wealth—and Heaven was kind to me. I know not why, unless that from my earlier years I sensed the fact that unseen helpers attend our steps, and felt a strong attraction to the thought that in some way—I knew not how—they loved to keep a watch over human lives and minister to men.

"I was not formally religious, indeed I could not be, in the sense of accepting the popular religious faith. I never could subscribe to the long and complicated statements of belief in which theology abounds. I was puzzled and perplexed and in constant doubt whenever I met or heard teachings of the miraculous and supernatural, and any supposed event which I heard in sermon or in conversation out of nature's order, set my mind questioning its reality. But of two things I never doubted and one was the beauty and sublimity of the life and teachings of Jesus, and the other was the reality of a spirit realm. I knew not whence these deep convictions came to me—it was not through logic or testimony or traditional belief—it was a growing sense of reality within my soul. And so, while I was not a man of formal prayer and never adopted any forms of public or private worship, in my soul I think I had as true and deep a sense of spiritual things as most of those who made profession of their faith.

"And I was often accustomed to lift my soul above the world in silent aspirations after help and wisdom, and truth and courage in my daily tasks, and to fervently desire that good might come to all and truth might triumph over error.

"Perhaps—I know not—it was because I ever recognized this Supreme Reality and felt my need and sometimes in the quiet of my heart possessed a faith that I should not be overcome and make a shipwreck of my life as my brothers had done—that Heaven was kind to me and gave me the richest boon that can come into the life of man between the cradle and the grave—the love of a pure good woman.

"Of her I dare not trust myself to speak even now after the violets have bloomed upon her grave for well nigh twenty years."

He paused and there was silence—deep and solemn in the room and a profound hush and awe in all our hearts—and then resumed.

"Heaven blessed our union with two children, son and daughter, and then took my wife away.

"I was growing rich. My hands had the Midas touch to turn all things to gold and as I looked upon my two sweet babes and felt that I must be their sole guide and protector—now that she was gone—and as I saw my fortune growing day by day and knew that death at any time might throw the weight of its great temptation into their young lives and ruin them as many others had been ruined with the curse of unearned wealth, a great fear and trembling took possession of my heart.

What should I do? What was best to do for them? How shield them from the fateful curse of inherited wealth? Perhaps I had grown morbid on the theme—maybe the tragedies I witnessed in my brother's lives had made my soul preternaturally acute to the dangers of inherited money.

"I know not—only this I know that night after night in my loneliness and gloom as I thought of my two children and knew that only the slender thread of my life stood between them and the dangers which had destroyed my brothers, there came over me a great fear. I looked ahead and saw them, inexperienced, unshielded, friendless—thrown under the power of a great temptation through great wealth. The thought was full of pain and dread. I saw them surrounded by parasites and deceivers whom wealth attracts—tempted to misjudge themselves and others through the glamor which wealth throws round us and, perhaps, victims of the corrupting power of wealth—victims of the very success that had attended me.

"How could I shield them? How make sure of that simplicity, sincerity, manliness and womanliness, often generated through humble service and toil of the poor, and often, alas! absent in the children of the rich and pampered.

"There was one way—only one—it seemed to me. I must rob my children of their own inheritance, throw

them on their own resources and cast them adrift upon the struggling waters of life till in nature's own way they acquired strength and courage and such sense of truth and right as might justify me in placing great wealth in their hands.

"I shuddered at the thought and for a time could not rise to the heroism of the sacrifice. In my lonliness and gloom I somehow felt in their presence a consolation for that irreparable loss which Heaven had inflicted on me in the death of my wife. But at last I made the firm resolve——."

(He had turned his face from me and seemed to be in sore distress).

"I made the firm resolve and sent him from me and robbed my only son of name, and home and father—I sent him to a country home when three years old——."

* * * * *

They tell me that here I had risen from my seat and with blanched face and uplifted hands was moving slowly toward him as he spoke. I do not know. Such movement must have been unconscious.

He resumed. "And for nearly twenty years I bore the slow martydom of his absence and left him to fight alone——."

"His name? His name?" I shouted in my agony of intense excitement.

"His name was Herman Molson Ashton"—he said.

* * * * *

I don't know how I reached him—whether he came to me or I to him—but I was in his arms and sobbing upon his breast.

"My Father—My Father—after all these years!"

"My son, My son forgive me."

"Forgive you!" I cried, "rather pardon me, my father, all my hard and unjust thoughts, my bold words. I did not understand—I could not know—forgive—forgive!"

"I did you greater wrong. I hold you guiltless for these words. I caused them by own deception." he

answered. We stood locked in close embrace for some moments when I heard a voice besides me, and turning saw Lucille who, with face radiant with joy, cried out:

"For years my hungry heart has longed for your embrace, my long-lost brother—for years—long painful years! And now at last, I can say, Welcome, Welcome Home!"

I know not how I lived through that hour—but as I turned Helena was on her knees before Mark Ashton's chair and each was asking pardon for the past and looking through tear-dimmed eyes toward the radiant future.

Then my father—how I love to write the words—wished to go on and finish his story and make more plain the many things we all misunderstood during the last year, but I pleaded for delay and kneeling before Mrs. Williams chair, I looked again into that face on which Heaven's calm was resting and reverently kissed her brow and said:

"But for your words of light and love and your sweet blameless life I had never stood the shock of the great temptation and been worthy of this hour!"

Then—after a season of general congratulation and rejoicing—my father resumed his tale. I sat listening to it with my brain still whirling under the excitement of the revelations he had made!

"Heaven was kind to me again in giving me as friend a cousin of my dear departed wife, whose presence sanctifies this meeting, and to her I committed the care and training of my boy, insisting on perfect secrecy and rigid discipline and that he be taught to fight life's battles for himself. As the 'Unknown Friend' I held communication with him occasionally and with Mrs. Williams through my New York bankers, and thus the years rolled on—such weary, weary years they were—until I became so cheered with hopes of worthy manhood in my boy I determined to be near him and, if possible, come into daily touch and contact with his life. I needed this to satisfy my own desires and I needed this to further test any qualities he might have of sterling character worthy

of a great estate and heavy responsibilities with which I wished to endow him.

"I need not detail all the means I used, but when at last after long years I beheld him in my office, an applicant for clerkship in my bank, my heart went out in such great longing that I could scarce restrain myself.

"Yet I subdued emotion and determined on some tests of his fine sense of honor and of truth and courage.

"I need not tell in full the story of my deception of the public and my deception of my boy. It pained me—oftentimes to have the world suspect me sordid, mean, avaricious and unjust. It tortured me to have my boy suspect, even to believe me bad. Often when compelled for some reason to assume before Helena, the part of miser or cheat or purse-proud millionaire, or hunter after empty, worthless titles of nobility and the gilded trapping of aristocracy of other lands, I hated myself for the character assumed.

"I had, however, my growing consolations. In Helena I began to see the very excess of wealth pall upon her tastes. I watched for these signs of spiritual life in her as the gardener watches the first signs of life in bulb and plant in Spring time.

"How joyfully I noted the signs of the new spiritual view of things that came to Helena. No miser ever gloated more over gold—no propagator of new flowers and fruits ever marked the signs of success in his experiments more eagerly than did I watch each unfolding bud of grace in her new and spiritual womanhood. I noted, as we perceive the signs of coming spring, her gradual loss of interest in the frivolities of fashion, her growing discontent with her own life, her severe judgment of her work and worth, her admiration of the good and true and beautiful in others—all, all I noted and over them had my secret happiness.

"And I had even greater joy in Herman's fidelity because the temptation and the strain were greater and more direct. I put him in the hottest of the fires. I knew his poverty and ambitions. I knew his early fascination with his fair pupil, the heiress to be, and knowing that poverty alone barred his asking for her hand, I opened

up before him a prospect of wealth in offering large inducements to him to become a banker but found him steadfast to his chosen mission.

"Then I set before him my conduct in the basest light. I posed before him as the smooth hypocrite—outwardly honest and respectable—but secretly through agents robbing honest poverty and reaping enormous profits from my wealth—not that I hoped to tempt him to a partnership therein, but only that I might see the stuff and metal of his being—whether he would cloak resentment to my face, stifle his indignation and shut up coward lips or dare rebuke me as a villain to my face.

"My friends, I think the happiest moment of my life in twenty years was when he rose, after listening to my villainous schemes of robbery of the poor and innocent farmers, and told me to my teeth he thanked kind Heaven he was poor and rather than possess a dollar of accursed wealth obtained in such a way, he'd beg a crust from door to door.

"Oh, I could have shouted out for gladness. I could have pressed him to my heart of hearts, and I feel sure my face—could he have read its riddle—would have told him my great admiration of his words.

"And so returning from his mission to the widow—where I had sent him to announce that she must quit her humble home and go forth into the streets to satisfy my greed for money, he came back raging with a fire of righteous indignation I had never seen in youth before.

"One thing I mention now as I have often been asked about it—the change that at certain times comes over my face, a sort of light that seems to illuminate my features. I feel a thrill of sudden emotion—always of a pleasurable nature, generally following a recounting of some noble deed—and succeeding this, there comes a warmth about the head, especially the face, as though the atmosphere about were heated and as the heat vibrations reach the nerves I am conscious of it at the time. I believe it is a spiritual atmosphere about me which changes to a glow of light and heat when stirred with nobler thoughts and deeds.

"And now, kind friends, my task is nearly ended and

I have but to ask your pardon for my long discourse and imperfect speech and bid you all a royal, generous welcome to these halls."

He ceased and Mrs. Williams spoke some noble words that seemed to bring a heaven of peace and rest into all our hearts.

Then Helena played and we joined in singing several of the old time songs and these in turn gave way to violin and vocal solos, after which we joined in merry groups of social converse and the hours sped on toward midnight.

Then refreshments, toasts and general merry-making followed and through all I walked about as one bewildered with excess of joy.

My father, too, at times, would leave the group he was conversing with and coming to my side would press me to his heart and calling for Lucille and Helena, embrace us all and often stop in speech because his heart was all too full for words.

Toward morning before we separated he called Helena to him and spoke some words in whisper and then said to all the guests:

"This good girl but a few days since gave formal notice that she soon would leave these halls and go forth, preferring poverty with another to great wealth here with me. But now, I'm proud to say, has changed her mind and still will be the mistress of this place. And Herman, too, has mitigated his harsh views of Ashton Hall and its hard master and will be a welcome guest and here, ere long, I trust we'll hear the music of a Wedding march in which all our souls will blend in harmony and love."

THE ETERNAL QUESTION.

JOHN GIBSON HUME.

Two years from the day when Herman Molson and the young ladies of Ashton Hall enjoyed their picnic on Chestnut Island, so graphically described in a chapter of Mr. Molson's Diary, and just one year after the remarkable meeting of Mr. Molson and Helena Ashton in the rose arbor, they were married in Rest Cottage on the same Island. Mrs. Williams officiated.

The wedding was a private one—only the two families from "The Willows" and Ashton Hall being present, save that Mrs. Perkins and her children, in the character of friends of the family, served the wedding feast.

The cottage and the arbor were beautifully decorated for the occasion and the wolk from the cottage to the arbor, along which Helena had gone to meet Herman, was festooned most artistically with flowers.

After the ceremony which was short and most impressive, the friends enjoyed a ramble exploring the beauties of the island, after which they had a delightful impromptu concert in Rest Cottage.

In the evening the island was, for the first time, open to invited guests, who came in hundreds from W——e and surrounding country, and some from a great distance, to extend their congratulations.

The guests of the evening after an ample collation and most delightful music and merry-making, departed, and an hour later the wedding party, were, in a very democratic manner, conveyed in small boats down the river to the city—Herman and Helena insisting on going in a boat by themselves.

While with idle oars their boat was drifting down the beautiful river, on which the full moon sparkled in myriad reflections of her glory, Helena again assumed a listening attitude and said:

"Herman, do you hear again that distant music?"

"Yes, Helena dear, I hear it but it seems nearer and more distinct now. I seem to hear and distinguish voices, sweet and familiar voices, and they are chanting hymns of praise. And as they sing I can shut my eyes and see faces, faces of my childhood days, all aglow with love and benediction bending o'er us and I feel the impress of soft hands upon my head."

And Helena made no answer but to place her hand in his and her head upon his breast.

And Mark Ashton, with a look of quiet happiness on his face, but a spirit of deep inquiry in his eyes, sat riding in the stern of his small boat down to W——e, pondering on the problem of his own life and the mystery of life in general. And in that silent meditation he was asking his soul many questions:

Was it worth the toil, sacrifice and heart-ache of twenty years to see this happy hour?

Would the world ever understand and judge aright his character and conduct?

Was there another tribunal, after death, before which all secrets would be revealed, all lives uncovered, all natures known?

Was there a realm in which our loved and our lost were living and in which memory and affection and interest in earth friends still survived?

Was the idolized wife and mother, who twenty years before had passed "into silence and pathetic dust" still lingering near and was she conscious and joyful over the happenings of this blissful day?

The full moon sailed on in majesty through a sea of fleecy clouds.

All nature was wrapped in peaceful silence save the rhythmic beating of river's wavelets against the sides of his small boat and the solemn call of a night bird in the lofty pines on the river's brink.

And Mark Ashton sighed, and shivering in the cool October air drew his cloak more closely around him.

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